

Practical Discourses

CONCERNING

Hearing the Word.

Preach'd at

The Friday Evening-Lecture in
EASTCHEAP.

By Several MINISTERS.

Rev. II. 11. *He that hath an Ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*

L O N D O N:

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THE PREFACE.

OUR Former Discourses upon the Duties of Singing Psalms, and of Prayer, having met with some Acceptance in the World ; and the Gentlemen of the same Society having renew'd their Request, that we would once more oblige them with some particular Subject ; we have thought it might answer some further valuable Purpose to undertake this Third Branch of the Solemn Worship of God, the

A 2 Duty

Duty of Hearing the Word
Preach'd.

This has been the great Instrument of Religion in all Ages, so as to obtain the special Character of the Power of God unto Salvation. The Rank it holds in our Religion, may be infer'd, from our Lord's making the Preaching the Word, the Business of his Life; and doing it the Honour to make even his Miracles themselves refer to it as a subservient Dispensation: for the Arm of the Lord was therefore made bare, that the Report of the Word might be believ'd. Indeed there can hardly be any greater Miracle, in proof of the Gospel, than its own Propagation in the World,

and

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and Prevalence over the Hearts of Men ; it has subdu'd Kingdoms, and conquer'd the World ; Pagan Darkness, and Popish Superstition flee before it. And tho' it be directly opposite to the whole corrupt Interest and Affections of human Nature, tho' it call Men to the greatest Self-Denial, and the most mortifying Duty ; and that too upon account of an invisible World to come nakedly propos'd : And further, tho' the Methods of its Propagation were so suitable to its own Spiritual and God-like Nature ; and all the Learning and Power, Wit and Cruelty of the World, Jews and Gentiles, combin'd against it, Hell with all its Arts joining in the Confederacy :

A 3 racy:

The PREFACE.

racy: yet it prevail'd, Satan fell like Lightning from Heaven; Men are rescu'd by it from his Power and Kingdom.

These are Effects as vastly beyond the Power of their Causes in the account of Sense, and all human Prospect, as can be parallel'd in any Miracles we meet with. Here was no Sword of Mahomet, no Inquisition, with Rope and Pully, to disjoint the Body, in order to set the Understanding to rights; no Force, no Compulsion, that's the constant Token of another Gospel, and a sure Mark of a false Religion. The Gospel of Christ only demands a fair Hearing, an Impartial Consideration, in order to our Compliance with what it recommends

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commends to our Belief and Practice : And wherever the Word of the Lord has such a free Course, it is generally so Glorify'd.

On the other hand, without this Hearing the Word we see the Power of Religion lost, and the Awe of God wear off the Spirits of Men, as appears in the Atheism of the Popish Countries, where Hearing the Word is in a manner swallow'd up by the Mass; and in the general Looseness of those among us, who turn their backs upon this Part of the Worship of God.

The Nature of the Subject, and the Distribution of it we have chose, make it unavoidable that some of the same things should

The PREFACE.

should be said, and the same Quotations made by several Persons in the several Parts of these Discourses; but then they are said not only in a different Manner, but to a different End and Purpose, and do so properly belong to the respective Parts under which they are us'd, that we must have done a real Injury to the Compleatness of the Subject, to have avoided but a seeming Repetition.

THE

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others. Sign'd to the original Owner.

THE NATURE

O F

Hearing the Word.

Newman, John, b. 1670: d. 1741

SERMON I.

PROV. XXVIII. 9.

*He that turneth away his Ear
from hearing the Law, even his
Prayer shall be Abomination.*

P RAYER and Hearing the Word are two most excellent and important Duties of practical Religion, and stated Parts of publick Worship. We have already in several Dil-

B courses

The NATURE of

Serm. I. courses from this Place recommended to you the conscientious Discharge of the *Former*, and our design in this present Undertaking is to treat of the *Latter*. As these two are ordinarily join'd together in our Practice, so it's evident from the Words of the Text that they have a mutual Influence upon each other. By these, our Spiritual Intercourse and Converse with Heaven is begun and maintain'd; in the one we speak to God, and in the other we attend him speaking to us. Without Prayer we shall never hear in a right manner, or have Grace to comply with the Instructions of the Word; for that must be deriv'd from above. And without Hearing we shall neither know what to pray for, nor what to practise. One of these Duties is so far from superseding the Necessity, or excusing the Neglect of the other, that unless we make Conscience of both, we cannot reasonably expect the divine Acceptance in either. Nay, we are here told, That tho Men should be ever so frequent and constant in their Devotions, yet if they turn away their Ear from hearing

ing God's Law, instead of finding a Serm. I.
favourable Audience, their very ~~~~~
Prayer will become an Abomination:
and with good reason; for what
can be more just and congruous,
than that the Great and Holy God
should reject their *Prayer* with De-
testation and Abhorrence, who pour
such Contempt upon his *Law*, as
not to think it worth their hear-
ing?

God in both these Institutions
greatly condescends to sinful *Dust*
and Ashes; his speaking to us in his
Word, as well as his allowing us
to speak to him in Prayer, is as
much an *Act of Grace* as of *Autho-*
rity. Whenever therefore he has
a Mouth to speak, we ought to
have Ears to hear. It must argue
unaccountable Pride and Folly in
us to expect he should hear when
we *call and cry*, if we suffer him to
speak, and we will not hear, and
to call after us, but we will give
him no answer; for surely none
who know God and themselfes can
be at a loss to judg who best de-
serves and may most justly claim a
Hearing. We are willing to hope
that you make conscience of Pray-

The NATURE of

Serm. I. ing, and no doubt you cannot but
 be desirous of Acceptance with God
 therein. Do not the Thoughts of
 having your Prayers in Abomination,
 fill you with awful Fear and Con-
 cern? Are you not willing to do
 whatever in you lies to prevent the
 contracting such heinous Guilt; and
 falling under so dreadful a Judg-
 ment? Now in order to avoid
 this, nothing would be more effec-
 tual, than for you so to hear as to
 obey the Counsels of God's Law;
 for then your Prayers instead of
 being an Abomination, will become
 his Delight.

In the Management of this Sub-
 ject, we shall proceed in the same
 Method we did in the Former.

1. We shall explain the Nature
 of the Duty.
2. Lay down the Obligations you
 are under to it.
3. Represent the Excellence and
 Advantages of it.
4. Answer Objections against it.
5. Propose suitable Directions for
 the right Performance of it. And,
 Lastly, Exhort with proper Mo-
 tives to the Practice of it.

It is only the First of these which Serm. I. comes under my Consideration, viz.

The NATURE of Hearing the Word: Which tho' it might seem more dry and less moving than some of the rest, yet it is very necessary and useful in its Place, and a fit Introduction to those that follow. Hearing is a Duty you are frequently engag'd in, and yet I fear the Nature of it is not so fully understood as it ought to be: and this is one reason why it is not better perform'd; and that the Advantages you reap by it are not more eminent and abiding. Here the Ground-work must be laid; God in Conversion begins with the Understanding, opens the Intellectual Eye, and turns Sinners from Darkness to Light; and we in our Preaching must endeavour to follow his Example. I do not see how Persons can be convinc'd of their Obligation to a Duty, or be in love with it, the Nature of which they do not rightly understand: Those Passions and Affections will be very short and fleeting, which do not flow from a well-inform'd Mind. I mention these things, to shew your

The NATURE of

Serm. I. Concern in, and excite your Attention to this Part of the Subject.

In speaking to it, I shall,

I. Lay down two Preliminaries for the more clear stating of it.

II. Consider what those things are which it does necessarily suppose. And,

III. What it more directly includes and carries in it.

I. The two things I would premise, are, (1.) That we shall only consider Hearing, as it is a religious Duty, distinct from all others. And, (2.) As it is a Part of publick Worship.

(1.) We are to consider it as a *Religious Duty* distinct from all others. Our Business is to treat of it in a Moral and Theological, not in a Physical Philosophical Sense. God's having endow'd the human Nature with these two noble Faculties of Speech and Hearing, is indeed a great Instance of his Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, for which we are oblig'd to be greatly thankful: By the one we are capable of

of communicating our Thoughts Serm. I.
and Sentiments to others; and by the other,
of receiving the same
Kindness from them. These render
Man a sociable conversable Crea-
ture, and by them the Pleasure and
Usefulness of human Society are
preserv'd and maintain'd. They are
not in themselves morally good or
evil, but become either Sin or Du-
ty, as they are us'd by us. Hearing
was in part the first inlet of Sin
and Misery into this World; for
Eve, by listning to the alluring
Suggestions of the *subtile Serpent*,
was ensnar'd and overcome; and
since that time this Sense has often
been, and still is a Means and Occa-
sion of much Sin. How fit and rea-
sonable then is it that it should be
consecrated to the Honour of God;
and Service of our Souls, by its be-
ing employ'd in a religious man-
ner?

Its being a *Duty*, denotes that we
are not at liberty to hear or not
hear as we please, but are some way
oblig'd to it by the Will of the
great God our Creator and Governor;
which Will of his is sufficiently signi-
fy'd and made known to us either in

Serm. I. Nature or Revelation. The Proof
of this you will have afterwards, I
only mention it here as that which
you ought to have an eye to in
Hearing; for nothing can be an Act
of Obedience in us, that is not foun-
ded upon, and regulated by the Au-
thority and Command of God.
When what we do is for the Matter
of it the same that God commands,
yet if it be done upon other Ac-
counts, and for other Reasons, and
not because he commands it, it is
not Duty and Obedience in us,
pleasing to and rewardable by him.

And as it's a Duty, so it is a
Religious one; it's a Part of God's
immediate Worship, and so belongs
to the Precepts of the *First Table*,
and is distinguish'd from that kind
of Hearing which is of a civil na-
ture, and belongs to the Duties of
the *Second Table*.

And then it is distinct from all
other religious Duties; there is
something peculiar in its Nature,
by which it is distinguish'd from
Praying, &c. The Sense of Hear-
ing is necessary, when we hold Com-
munion with others in those Du-
ties: for how can we actually join
in

in the Prayers and Praises of the Serm. I. publick Congregation ; and by offering them up to God make them our own, if we do not hear and understand what is pray'd and sung ? But now in these, God is the Object we immediately address our selves to, the Minister is only our Mouth to him ; he and we join in the same Duty. It is otherwise in Preaching and Hearing, as they are distinct Duties : the former intirely belongs to the Minister, who therein is God's Mouth to you ; the latter intirely belongs to you, which you are every one to perform for your selves.

(2.) We must consider it as it is a Part of *publick Worship* ; and thus it is distinguish'd from bare hearing the Sacred Scriptures, or a good Sermon, or any other devotional Book, read in a more private Way, and by Persons of a private Character ; and from attending to Parental, Family Instruction, or that religious Conference which Christians should have one with another. These are all religious Duties, which we are bound to make Conscience of, and which have their Use and

Serm. I. Advantage. It is the Sin and Shame
of the Professors of this Age, that they are so much neglected ; the Dust upon some Men's Bibles will witness against them for this Neglect. God commanded the *Isra-*

Deut. vi. 6, 7. elites that they should have the Words

of his Law in their Hearts ; and to teach them diligently to their Children, and to talk of them when they sat in their Houses, and when they walk'd by the way, when they lay down, and when they rose up. God gives

Gen. xviii. 19. this Character of *Abraham* : *I know him that he will command his Children*

and his Household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord. It was the Commendation of *Timothy*, that thro the religious Care of his

2 Tim. iii. 15. Mother and Grandmother, from a Child he knew the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto Salvation.

The Kings of *Israel* were oblig'd to write a Copy of the Law, and to have it by them, that they might read therein all the Days of their Life. Were the greatest Princes oblig'd to this, and can private Persons think themselves unconcern'd ? or with any Modesty plead the Variety and Hurry of Business

Deut. xvii. 18, 19.

siness in excuse for their Neglect of Serm. I. conversing with it? So for religious Conference; we are told that in Times of common Danger and general Apostacy, *they who fear'd the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearken'd and heard,* &c. Mal. iii. 16. Did the great God think their Conversation worth hearkning to and hearing, and shall not private Christians be ready to hear from one another Discourses of this nature? If these Duties were rightly perform'd, they would prepare for, and greatly subserve the Design of Ministerial Instruction; but they must not by any means be set up in opposition to, or competition with publick Hearing. They are of an inferior Nature and Excellency; God in them speaks to us in a more private Way, but in Preaching he sends and employs one authoriz'd by himself, who in a sense represents his own Person, and does in his Name and Stead speak unto us. So that the Messenger, as well as the Message, requires and deserves our dutiful Regard and Attention.

Serm. I.

II. We are to consider the several things which this Duty does necessarily *presuppose*, which I shall a little explain and open; and they are such as these,

1. It supposes a written *Revelation* of God's Will, as the Standard by which we are to try every thing we hear: This is contain'd in that Sacred Book we call *the Bible*, which is the compleat Rule of our Faith and Practice. We live not at a time wherein the Church is favour'd with inspir'd Teachers; and therefore nothing is to be admitted by us as a necessary Article of Faith, or Rule of Life, but what can fairly be evidenc'd to be either in express Terms contain'd in the Scriptures, or by just consequence infer'd from them. Were it not for this Revelation, we should be in continual danger of being impos'd upon either by cunning Hereticks, or bold Enthusiasts, and so of falling into dangerous and pernicious Delusions. In the first Ages of the World, the Church of God was destitute of a written Revelation. This was the State of it, as far as we find, from *Adam*

to

to Moses; but in this Space of Time Serm. I. we frequently read of many parti-
cular Appearances and Discoveries God made of himself, to the Holy Patriarchs, who were the Heads of religious Families. And when the Matter reveal'd was of common Concerntment, he by them communicated the notice of it to others, and this did then serve the Church instead of a written Revelation. But after the Church grew more large and extensive, and stood in need of a more publick standing Discovery of God's Will, he was graciously pleas'd to inspire Holy Penmen for this purpose. So the Apostle Paul assures us; *All Scrip-* ^{1 Tim. iii. 16} *ture is given by Inspiration of God.* And Peter; *That Holy Men of God* ^{2 Pet. i. 21.} *spake as they were mov'd by the Holy Ghost.*

The Substance of what is written was first spoken; the Preaching of the inspir'd Prophets and Apostles had the same Authority with those who were so happy as to attend their Ministry, which their Writings have with us. But after the Sacred Canon was finish'd, the Spirit of Inspiration soon ceas'd, and

we

Serm. I. we have now no reason to expect
 ~~~~~ that God will any more employ  
 such inspir'd Teachers in his Church.  
 His People ever since are sent upon  
 all occasions to the written Word,  
 and are requir'd to try all Doctrines

*H. viii. 20.* by it: *To the Law and to the Testi-  
 mony, if they speak not according to  
 this Word, it is because there is no*

*Light in them. Believe not every Spi-  
 rit, but try the Spirits whether they  
 are of God.* All that have Confi-  
 dence enough to pretend to Inspira-  
 tion, are not to be credited upon  
 their bare Word; yea, their Pre-  
 tences to it are to be rejected, un-  
 less confirm'd by Prophecy or Mi-  
 racles, and what they teach is no  
 further to be receiv'd than as it a-  
 grees with the written Word. St.

*Paul himself says to the Galatians;*

*Gal. i. 8.* *tho He or an Angel from Heaven  
 should preach any other Gospel unto  
 them, then that he had preach'd unto  
 them, Let him be accursed.* The

*2 Pet. i. 18, 19* *Scriptures are a more sure Word of  
 Prophecy, than a Voice from Hea-*

*Luk. xvi. 31.* *ven; if Men will not believe Moses  
 and the Prophets, neither will they be-  
 lieve, tho one rose from the Dead.*

The Holy Apostles themselves did  
 not

not think it a Disparagement to Serm. I.  
them to have their own Preaching ~~as~~  
try'd by the Scriptures of the Old  
Testament ; instead of being angry  
with the *Bereans*, they highly com-  
mend them, as *more noble than those* <sup>A&.xvii.15.</sup>  
*of Thessalonica, in that they receiv'd*  
*the Word with all readiness of Mind,*  
*and search'd the Scriptures daily whe-*  
*ther those things were so.* Not only  
their Inspiration, but the Truth of  
their Doctrine is justly to be sus-  
pected who shun this way of Trial.  
Hearing would be a dangerous  
thing, if we were bound immedi-  
ately to assent to every thing we  
hear as a Divine Truth, and had  
not a written Revelation for our  
Rule, and Liberty to try all Doc-  
trines by it.

2. This must also suppose the  
divine Institution of a *Gospel-Mi-  
nistry*, and the actual Exercise of  
that Office. Preaching and Hear-  
ing have a mutual Reference to each  
other, they stand or fall together ;  
for how can some be oblig'd to hear,  
unless others are authoriz'd and ob-  
lig'd to preach ? Thus the Apostle  
argues, *How shall they believe in him* <sup>Rom. x. 14,</sup>  
*of whom they have not heard, and* <sup>15.</sup>  
*how*

Serm. I. how shall they hear without a Preacher,  
and how shall they preach except they be  
sent? As it is necessary in the nature  
of the thing that there be some  
to preach; so it's very evident that  
this Office is peculiar and appropriate  
to some, and does not lie in  
common to all. And this Distinction  
between some and others is not owing  
to bare human Compact, to pre-  
vent Disorder and Confusion, but  
is founded upon a divine Institu-  
tion; yea, it seems difficult to con-  
ceive how Hearing can be a reli-  
gious Duty, if Preachers are only  
Creatures of Man's making, and do  
no way derive their Authority from  
Christ. Where such Notions pre-  
vail, Men will soon think themselves  
at liberty to hear or not hear them  
as they please.

The Age we live in has pour'd  
great Contempt upon the Sacred  
Ministry; thro the Sides of Mi-  
nisters they have endeavour'd to  
wound Religion it self: and I heart-  
ily wish there were no reason to  
say, that the immoral Lives of  
some that bear that Character, and  
the groundless and extravagant  
Heights to which others have ad-  
vanc'd

vanc'd the Ministerial Power, have Serm. I. not given too great occasion for these Reproaches. However, the Office it self is never the leſs excellent and useful, and the Faults and Miscarriages of particular Persons ought not to lessen our Esteem and Value for it, or for those that are duly qualify'd for, and faithfully employ'd in it. The Ministry I am pleading for is that of ordinary *Pas-tors* and *Teachers*, whose Work and Business it is not to bring any new Revelations, but only to explain and apply those contain'd in the written Word. If Persons are willing to be determin'd in this matter by the New Testament, I do not see that upon an impartial Search any can doubt whether there was such an Office instituted by Christ, or that it is his Will it should continue in his Church *to the End of the World*. The Apostle tells us, that when Christ ascended on High, he gave some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, &c. The Office of Pastors and Teachers is as much the Gift of Christ as that of Apostles and Prophets. The End and Design

Eph. iv. 11,  
12, 13.

Serm. I. sign of his Office, is the perfecting  
of the Saints, the Work of the Ministry,  
and the edifying of the Body of Christ. And this is to continue till  
we all come in the Unity of the Faith,  
and of the Knowledg of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the  
Measure of the Stature of the Fulness  
of Christ. This shews that as long  
as the Church continues in its pre-  
sent State of Imperfection, both as  
to Knowledg, Faith, and Holiness,  
it will not be above the need of a  
Gospel-Ministry.

This same Apostle in his Epistles  
to Timothy and Titus further de-  
scribes the Nature of this Office,  
lays down the necessary Qualifica-  
tions of those who are to be inves-  
ted in it, and gives Rules and Or-  
ders about the manner of their En-  
trance into it. In some Places he  
enumerates the several Duties ow-  
ing from Pastors to their People,  
and in others he puts them in mind  
of the Duties they owe unto their  
Pastors. He speaks of Ministers as  
their Guides and Governors, as

Heb.xiii.17. those who have the Rule over them,  
<sup>1 Thess. v.</sup> whom they are to obey, and esteem  
<sup>12, 13.</sup> highly for their Work sake. When he  
took

took his leave of the *Elders of the Serm. I. Church of Ephesus*, he charges them <sup>A&s xx. 28.</sup> to take heed unto themselves, and to <sup>Ἐμοιχό-</sup> all the Flock over which the Holy Ghost <sup>πεσ.</sup> hath made them Overseers, or Bishops. Here he reminds them whose Ministers they were, and from whom they deriv'd their Authority.

Our Blessed Saviour, in his Commission to his Apostles after his Resurrection, appoints them to *Go and teach all Nations, baptizing them Mat. xxviii.* in the Name of the Father, and of <sup>19.</sup> the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things which he had commanded them; and he promises to be \* with them always to the End of the World. In this Commission he seems not so much to describe the Nature of the Apostolical Office and Work, as that which belongs to ordinary Pastors; and therein he promises to be with them to the End of the World. Particular Churches in every Age may take comfort in, and expect the performance of this Promise, as long as they keep close to this

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\* See Dr. Calamy's Sermon of the Ministry.  
Com-

Serm. I. Commission. The Learned \* Stillingfleet fully proves, That by the End of the World must be meant either the Dissolution of this material World, or the Consummation of the Gospel-Dispensation: take it either way, the Sense is the same; for tho these two did not commence, they will expire together. The Phrase is never us'd concerning the Destruction of *Jerusalem* by the Romans, or for the Expiration of the Jewish Oeconomy: besides, it is a very unnatural and forc'd Interpretation, that Christ should only promise to be with his Disciples till that time; for then *John the Beloved Apostle*, who surviv'd that Destruction, would have been so unhappy as to have outliv'd the Duration of this Promise. This Commission was not executed in its full Extent when *Jerusalem* was destroy'd, nor is it to this day; there are and will be some of all Nations still to be baptiz'd and taught, even to the End of the World: and therefore while Persons in Obedience to Christ's Command, engage

in such a good Work, they may expect his gracious Presence with them.

These are sufficient Significations of Christ's Will, not only that there should be such an Office, but that it should continue in the Church from Age to Age: and indeed it seems very unreasonable to suppose, that such an Office as this should be necessary whilst the Apostles were living, and the miraculous Gifts were so plentifully diffus'd; and that now it should become wholly unnecessary and useless, when these things are long since ceas'd. If ever the Christian Church could without Loss and Detriment, have spar'd the Pastoral Office, sure it must have been in the Apostolical Age it self, that Age of Miracles; but it was needful then, and therefore much more now. The Ministerial Office is as really the Institution of Christ as the Christian Church; and therefore we may depend upon it, he will take care that the one shall be of the same Duration with the other; and whilst there continue a Number of humble serious Christians in the World, there will not be

Serm. I. be wanting those who will have a  
just Value for, and Regard to this  
Institution of his.

3. This supposes some *Acquaintance* with, and Faith in the written Revelation: For how can we make use of that in trying the Doctrines we hear, which we have no knowledg of; or what Credit shall we pay to it, if we believe not its Truth and divine Authority? I deny not but God may make use of Hearing as a means of convincing Men of the Truth of the Scriptures: and it may be a Minister's Duty sometimes to lay before his Hearers some of those rational Evidences by which they are prov'd to come from God; this may be necessary for confirming the Faith, and increasing the Holiness and Comfort of God's People; and if any real Infidels or Anti-Scripturists are present at such Discourses, they may, thro the Divine Blessing, prove a means of their Conviction and Conversion. But those who are under a prevalent Disbelief of the Truth of the Scriptures, can never be religious Hearers; they will not attend upon Preaching as a divine Institution;

Institution ; for that supposes their Serm. I.  
Belief of the Scriptures, wherein *~~~*  
only that Institution is to be found.

In the Beginning of Christianity, before the New Testament was written, or the Doctrine of it generally dispers'd and known, the unbelieving *Jews* and *Gentiles* had no other way of coming to the Knowledg of it, than by attending the Preaching of the Apostles; and God was pleas'd to bless their Endeavours for the Conversion of Multitudes. But when particular Churches were gather'd and constituted, both Pastors and People are suppos'd to believe the Sacred Scriptures, and to make them the stated Rule of all their Administrations. Thus it is where Christianity is the establish'd Religion, Persons are taught from their Childhood and Youth to reverence the Scriptures as a divine Revelation. This kind of Faith the Generality have, till by falling into wicked Company they come to make *shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience*: tho this falls short of that which is justifying and saving, yet it is necessary and useful in its place. It puts Men upon ac-

Serm. I. acquainting themselves with their  
Bible, and upon paying some deference and regard to what they hear agreeable to it. But where this kind of Faith is wholly wanting, it cannot be expected they will either study the Scriptures themselves, or attend the Preaching of them by others.

4. This further supposes Opportunity and Capacity for hearing. Prayer is a Duty that may be perform'd at any Time, and in any Place; the Passage between Heaven and Earth is always, and every where open. It is not in the power of our most malicious Enemies to shut it up; they can neither hinder the Aspirations or Ascent of a pious Soul towards Heaven, nor prevent God's gracious Visits and Communications to such a one. When his Children are shut up in Prisons and Dungeons, or are banish'd at the greatest distance from their earthly Friends and Relations, they have or may have, a liberty of Converse with him by Prayer and Meditation. Thus sometimes, like their Lord and Master, when they are most alone as to Men, they are least *alone, because*

cause the Father is with them. But Serm. I. now hearing the Word preach'd ~~is~~ is a social Duty, which necessarily <sup>Joh. xvi. 32.</sup> requires the Presence and Assistance of the Minister. In order to it, a Door of Liberty and Utterance must be open'd for it. The Apostle Paul puts the *Ephesians* and *Colossians* upon Praying for this on his behalf. God sometimes drives his Ministers into Corners; nay, suffers them by the Power and Rage of their Enemies to be torn and banish'd from their People into foreign Countries. This is the deplorable Condition of the French Ministers and Churches to this very day. Sometimes there is no open Vision, God sends a Famine of Hearing the Word; so that they wander from Sea to Sea, from one Place to another, and run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord, and shall not find it. At other times, Persons are detain'd God's Prisoners in their own Habitations by Pain and Sickness, or other afflictive Providences, whereby they are necessarily depriv'd of the Benefit of publick Ordinances. Now in these Cases, either when they can have no Opportunity of Hearing, or are put

Eph. vi. 19.  
Col. iv. 3.

Amos viii.  
12.

Serm. I. out of a Capacity of attending upon God in that Ordinance, it becomes impracticable, and so ceases to be a Duty. The want of an Opportunity is a great Infelicity and Affliction, and will be so esteem'd by those who have a due Value for the Word of God. When *David*,  
<sup>psal. xlvi.</sup> by the Persecution of *Saul*, was driven from the publick Worship of  
<sup>1, 2.</sup>  
<sup>lxviii. 1, 2.</sup> God in the Sanctuary, he in several Psalms expresses the deep sense he had of his great loss, bitterly bewails and laments it, and earnestly desires to be restor'd to his former Privileges and Enjoyments. And this should be the Temper of Christians, when under the like Circumstances. If they are conscious to themselves that this Loss is not of their own sinful procuring, it may the more easily be born; and if they abound so much the more in secret and private Duties, they have reason to hope God will make it up by more immediate and plentiful Communications from himself.

We of this Nation have great cause thankfully to acknowledg God's Goodness to us in that long Day of Gospel-Light and Liberty we

we have enjoy'd : A wide Door has been Serm. I.  
open'd for us, and none have hitherto  
been able to shut it, tho' there have  
been, and still are many Adversaries.  
And we ought to be careful, lest ei-  
ther by the wilful Omission or care-  
less Performance of this Duty, or by  
our spiritual Barrenness and Unfruit-  
fulness, our Pride and Wantonness  
under the Word ; we provoke God to  
cut us short of such Opportunities,

5. This Duty necessarily supposes  
such previous habitual *Dispositions* in  
the Subject, as are suitable to the  
Nature of it. No moral Duty can  
be acceptably perform'd without the  
Exercise of these : And how can  
they be excited and drawn forth,  
if they have no previous Existence ?  
It's true, that where these are at  
first but very weak and defective,  
yet by constancy and diligence in  
Duty they may be, and ordinarily  
are greatly cherish'd and improv'd.  
Nay, I deny not, but God may  
sometimes, under the Word, im-  
mediately produce them in those  
who before were wholly destitute  
of them. However, whilst Persons  
are under the power of corrupt  
Nature, and altogether without an

Serm. I. inherent Principle of Grace, they  
are unfit for the acceptable dis-  
charge of any religious Duty. Tho  
in this case the total Neglect would  
be more criminal than the defective  
Performance.

As a Principle of Grace is a ne-  
cessary pre-requisite to every Gospel  
Duty, so there are some holy Dis-  
positions which are peculiarly suit-  
able to this of Hearing: Such, for  
instance; as an humble Sense of our  
own Ignorance and Darkness, and  
of the Need we stand in, both of  
Divine and Ministerial Instruction; an  
awful Sense of God's Superiority  
over us, and of his Right to enjoin  
whatever he pleases; a lively Con-  
viction of the Weakness and Imper-  
fection of Natural Light, and of  
the Necessity and Advantage of Su-  
pernatural Revelation to instruct  
and direct us in the way both of  
our Duty and Happiness, and of  
the Obligations we lie under to ac-  
quaint our selves with, and to sub-  
mit to it. There must be a just  
Sense of God's Wisdom and Good-  
ness in appointing a Gospel-Mi-  
nistry, and in speaking to us by  
Men like our selves; of the same  
Frame

Frame and Make, and subject to the Serm. I. same *Passions* and Infirmitie<sup>s</sup>; who have an equal Concern with us in what they preach, and who must be judg'd, sav'd, or condemn'd by this Gospel, as they are obedient or disobedient to it. Persons are not like to hear to any good purpose, until they are habitually possess'd with these, and such like apprehensions of Mind.

But to these should be further added, suitable Dispositions of Heart. We find by the *Parable of the Sower*, that the *Seed of the Word* was lost, or did bear Fruit, according to the different nature of the Soil it was cast into. The Heart is not prepar'd for the Word, till it is deliver'd from those Lusts and Passions, which, like Thorns and Weeds, spoil and *choak* it. There must be a *readiness* of Mind to receive it, and a *good and honest Heart* to keep and preserve it. There must be a love to Truth, as Truth; an impartial Desire to know the whole Mind and Will of God concerning our Duty; a disposition to admit of Light and Conviction, and to lay aside, as much as possible, all

Serm. I. Prejudices and Prepossessions. Persons that resolve before-hand, they will admit nothing they hear for Truth but what favours and countenances their own preconceiv'd Notions and Opinions, practically set up for Infallibility, and come to Sermons as Judges, and not as humble Learners at the Feet of Christ. Tho on the one hand we must not be like Children, toss'd to and fro by every Wind of Doctrine; yet on the other, we must not obstinately persist in any Opinion against the clearest Light and Evidence that can be brought to the contrary. Truth as Truth, wherever we find it, must with a Freedom and Openness of Mind be readily embrac'd, by whomsoever it is propos'd to us, or how contrary foever it may be to our former Thoughts and Sentiments. But some things of this nature will be more distinctly consider'd under the Directions, and therefore I pass on.

Serm. v.

III. To consider what those things are which this Duty does more directly include and carry in it. The general Nature of it lies in a due

Atten-

*Attendance upon the Word preach'd.* Serm. I.  
In this short Description of it, the Word preach'd is the Object of it; by which is meant more than the bare publick Reading of the Scriptures in the Congregation. This is indeed not only a laudable Practice, but an express Duty. *Moses was read in the Synagogue every Sabbath-day:* And St. Paul orders his <sup>Col. iv. 16.</sup> *Epistles to be read in the Churches.* If this were more constantly and generally practis'd, it would be of considerable Use and Service. By this means those who either cannot, or will not read in private, might arrive at some acquaintance with the Scriptures, and so be more capable of understanding and judging of the Sermons they hear. But certainly this is not the whole or principal part of a Minister's Work, or what the Apostle means by Preaching, in that solemn Charge to *Timothy: I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ,* <sup>2 Tim. iv. 1, 2.</sup> *who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his Appearing, and his Kingdom; Preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all Long-suffering and*

Serm. I. *Doctrine.* It's evident, that Preaching in the Scripture-sense must include the Exposition, Application, and Ipculcation of Divine Truths, *comparing of Spiritual Things with Spiritual*, one place of Scripture with another; that by this means they may give a more clear and distinct account of those Doctrines and Duties which are more generally laid down in the Word. The Priests and Scribes under the Jewish Oeconomy, did not only read the Law,  
Neh. viii. 3. but *gave the Sense, and caused the People to understand the Reading.* And it would be strange indeed, if as much as this should not be requir'd of Gospel-Ministers, whose Ministry is more excellent and spiritual than theirs was. Tho the general Heads of the Apostles preaching be contain'd in the Scriptures, and these are to be the Foundation and Ground-work of all our Preaching; yet God has not thought fit to transmit to us all their particular Explications and Enlargements. More words are necessary to convey into the minds of Men a right understanding of Gospel-Doctrines and Duties, than the bare recital of Scripture Express-

Expressions. We may observe, that Serm. I. what is said concerning these, is not always to be found in one and the same place, but is scatter'd up and down in the sacred Writings; and therefore would remain unobserv'd by most, if some were not employ'd to collect and explain them.

Would the Apostle insist upon such eminent Qualifications in Preachers; would he charge them who are intrusted with this Sacred Office, not to commit it to any but <sup>2 Tim. ii. 2.</sup> faithful Men, who shall be able to teach others also; or would he count those especially worthy of double Honour, who labour in the Word and Doctrine; if bare Reading the Scripture was all the Preaching they were oblig'd to? The *Ethiopian Eunuch* did read the Scriptures, and yet was sensible of his need of some one to guide him, in order to his understanding them. And we are told that *Philip*, at his Request, did from that Scripture, Isa. 53. preach Jesus to him. And this he did, not barely by reading it over again, but by opening and expounding it; shewing that it was a Prophecy of

Serm. I.

  
A&ts viii.  
31, &c.

the Messiah, and had its exact accomplishment in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. Thus you see that it is the Exposition, and not the bare Reading of Scripture, which you are to attend upon.

This your Attendance necessarily includes your bodily *Presence*; the attention of the Ear, with all the external Signs of becoming Reverence in the Countenance and Carriage. Whilst the Soul is in Union with the Body, it is necessarily confin'd to it, and acts by it; it hears by the Ear, and sees by the Eye: it cannot be present at Duty if the Body be absent; nor can there be much inward Attention, Reverence and Devotion, where the Ear is unattentive, or the Eye drowsy and sleepy, roving and wandring; for the Countenance is usually the Index of the Mind. Besides, God is the Lord of the whole Man; our Bodies were the Workmanship of his admirable Wisdom and Power; they are the Purchase of his Son's Blood, and should be the *Temples of the Holy Ghost*, and may share in the glorious Rewards of Obedience and Sufferings; and therefore should bear

bear their part in this and every Serm. I.  
religious Duty. We should *glorify*   
*God with our Bodies*, as well as *Spir-*  
*its, which are his.* But tho' all this  
be necessary, this alone is not suf-  
ficient. The chief work of a reli-  
gious Hearer is *internal*, such as  
must be perform'd by the Soul, and  
only comes under the view of God  
and Conscience; and it includes in  
it these following Particulars.

1. Where there is a due atten-  
dance, Preaching is chiefly ey'd and  
regarded as it is a Divine *Institu-*  
*tion.* Such do not come to hear  
that they may gratify and indulge  
a vain Curiosity, or that they may  
meet with something to please and  
entertain a carnal Mind. Nor is  
personal Respect to the Preacher, a  
high Opinion of his Parts and  
Learning, Ingenuity, or Wit, the  
chief Motive of their coming; but  
they attend upon it as an Ordinance  
of God, appointed for Spiritual  
Ends and Purposes. Without a  
regard to his Institution, we shall  
be tempted to look upon it as a  
weak and foolish thing; whereas  
that which bears the stamp of his  
Authority, shall be accompany'd  
with

Serm. I. with his Presence and Blessing, and  
 may justly raise and encourage our  
 expectation of Spiritual good from  
 it. *It bath pleased God by the foolish-  
 ness of Preaching, to save them that  
 believe. For the foolishness of God is  
 wiser than Men: and the weakness of  
 God is stronger than Men. He hath  
 chosen the foolish things of the World  
 to confound the wise, &c. that no Flesh  
 should glory in his Presence.* There  
 is great Virtue and Efficacy in a  
 Divine Institution; if our regards  
 to it were more sincere and in-  
 tire, the Success would be answer-  
 able.

I know there is a great Variety of  
 spiritual Gifts and Qualifications a-  
 mong those who are the faithful  
 Ministers of Christ; some are more  
 suited to one Capacity, others to  
 another. Where Persons are at  
 liberty, and a greater Good does  
 not hinder, they may, and ought  
 to consult their own Edification;  
 but then they must be sure not to  
 mistake the true Nature of Spir-  
 itual Edification, in thinking that  
 nothing edifies them but what either  
 pleases their Fancies, or raises their  
 sensitive Passions and Affections.

Such

1 Cor. i.  
21, 25, 27,  
29.

Such Qualifications in Ministers Serm. I. should be the ground of our esteem and choice as are truly Ministerial, and most adapted to answer the great Ends of the Ministry: And after all, we must expect more from it, as it is an Ordinance of Christ, than barely the Performance of a Man, tho ever so wise and skilful, pious and faithful. By overlooking the Institution of God, and having too rais'd expectations from Man, we provoke him to blast the most promising Means. On the contrary, a weaker Ministry is oft-times greatly bless'd, when it is the best Persons can conveniently and regularly enjoy, and is attended upon from sense of Duty to God, in obedience to his Command, and in a dependance upon his Presence and Blessing.

2. This includes the diligent *Attention* of the Mind to what is preach'd, which lies in a heedful Regard to, and Fixation of the Thoughts upon what is spoken. It is oppos'd to wandrings and distractions of Mind, and to the admission of other Thoughts that are unsuitable and unseasonable in time  
of

Serm. I. of Hearing. When the Lord had  
*open'd Lydia's Heart,* Acts xvi. 14. she attended to  
the things which were spoken of Paul.

The Author to the Hebrews says,  
*Heb. ii. 2.* we ought to give the more earnest  
heed to the things which we have  
heard, lest at any time we should let  
them slip. Our Saviour's Followers

*Luke xix.*  
*48.* were attentive to hear him. It is  
very possible, and I fear too com-  
mon a thing, for the bodily Ear to  
be visibly attentive, for the Eye  
to be fix'd, and the Countenance  
grave and compos'd, when the  
Mind is roving with *the Fool's Eyes*  
*to the end of the Earth.* Some are  
so immers'd in worldly Business,  
and over-charg'd with *the cares of*  
*this Life,* or so intoxicated with  
sensual Pleasures; that these things  
croud into and possess their Minds,  
when they should be attending to  
the Word of God. If some Mens  
Thoughts were printed upon their  
Foreheads, so as to be seen and  
observ'd by the Congregation, it  
would fill them with Shame and  
Confusion of Face.

It must be allow'd, that we have  
not the perfect command and go-  
vernment of our own Thoughts; the  
best

best do not, cannot perform this Serm. I.  
or any other Duty, with a total freedom from *distraction*. The Mind is very apt to wander and stray, and more so at some times than others, unless it be *kept with all Diligence*. Great pains and watchfulness are necessary to keep up a constant and close Attention of Mind throughout a Duty. As faithful Ministers will endeavour that nothing may be wanting on their part that may contribute to this, so religious Hearers will take pains with themselves to quicken and engage their Attention; they will check and recal their wandring Hearts, and not allow *vain Thoughts to lodg. within them*; and will *stir up themselves to mind the Duty they have in hand*. The sense of the Majesty and Greatness, the Power and Authority, Holiness and Omnipotence of the God who speaks to us; together with a sense of the Nature and Excellence, of the Weight and Importance of what is spoken, and our near Concern in it; justly deserves and calls for our most awful and serious Attention. And where there is a lively sense of these things,

Serm. I. things, it will command it: Where  
~~~~~ this is wholly wanting, Persons can-  
not properly be said to hear; for
they will not so hear as to under-
stand, be affected with, and retain
what they hear.

3. This further includes, the Ex-
ercise of the Mind to *understand* the
Sense and Meaning of what is
preach'd. It is possible that Per-
sons may so far attend as to hear
every Word in a Sermon, and yet
thro the Ignorance and Darkness of
their own Minds, they may under-
stand little or nothing of the hea-
venly Doctrine couch'd in those
words. The Minister may be *as a*
Barbarian to them, they may go a-
way as ignorant as they came; nay,
thro Misapprehension, with Minds
fill'd with gross Error instead of
divine Light and Truth. Con-
sidering the great Variety of ex-
cellent and useful Preaching, with
which this City and Nation ab-
ounds, it is impossible Men should
continue so ignorant and injudi-
cious, as too many do, if those
Sermons were clearly understood
by them: and whilst they are not,
Preaching and Hearing are but vain
things.

things. Rational Creatures can never assent to, be affected with, or put in practice what they do not understand. Our blessed Saviour was very sensible of the Necessity and Importance of this, and therefore in kindness to his Disciples, he often ask'd them, whether they *understood* his publick Discourses: and for their clearer information, he frequently gave them the Interpretation of them in private. Thus in the Parable of the Sower, he prefaces the Interpretation with, *Hear ye the Parable.* They had heard Mat. xiii. 18. the words of it before, but by this Expression he intimates, they could not in any tolerable sense be said to hear what they did not understand. And when at other times they mistook the design and meaning of his Words, he always took care to rectify their Mistakes, and to set them right again.

There is a Duty incumbent on *Ministers*, that you may become intelligent Hearers. They must preach with the greatest Clearness and Plainness; in the most distinct and methodical Manner, endeavouring to accommodate themselves to the Capa-

Serm. I. Capacities of the Persons they speak
~~~~~ to. Those Truths which are most  
weighty and necessary, are most  
plain and easy to be understood:  
These should chiefly be insisted on,  
and not matters of nice Specula-  
tion or *doubtful Disputation*. When  
the more sublime and mysterious  
Doctrines of the Gospel are treat-  
ed of, it should be done in a Scrip-  
tural and not in a Scholastick way,  
with great *plainness of Speech*. And  
whilst we keep close to Scripture-  
Expressions, what is necessary to be  
known and believ'd of these things  
will be render'd sufficiently plain and  
intelligible. When Persons out of a  
vain ostentation of Wit and Elo-  
quence, preach above the Capacities  
of their Hearers, they do the same  
thing as if they preach'd in *an un-  
known Tongue*. Now St. Paul chose  
*rather to speak five words*, by which he  
*might teach others, than ten thousand*  
*in an unknown Tongue*. And there is  
no serious faithful Minister, who has  
the Honour of Christ and the Sal-  
vation of Souls lying near his  
Heart, but will be of the Apostle's  
Mind.

But

But then there is a Duty incumbent on *You*, as well as on Ministers, which you must make Conscience of on your part. It is fit you should make choice of, and sit under such a Ministry as is most suited to your Capacity ; and it is also necessary that you be well acquainted with, and attend to the holy Scriptures, that are the Rule by which you are to judg of what you hear ; and then, when what is preach'd is no other than a true Exposition of them, it will easily become intelligible to you. Besides, there must be in time of Hearing, the closest application of Mind ; you must observe the general Design, Scope, and Drift of a Sermon ; the great Truth or Duty propos'd to be explain'd ; the Scripture-foundation upon which it is built ; the Parts into which it is divided ; the Connexion there is between one Truth and another ; how one is infer'd from or illustrated by another. And if every thing at first be not so plain and clear, you must be thankful if any fresh light is struck into your Minds, and endeavour, by after-Enquiries, to understand

Serm. I. derstand what yet remains dark and  
 intricate.

But after all, you must be very sensible of the Ignorance and Blindness of your own Minds ; your very great Proneness to fall into Mistakes and Errors, and of the need you stand in of the special Illuminations and Teachings of the Holy Ghost. There must be an actual Dependance on Application for, and Expectation of, his Light and Influence. You should *not lean to your own Understanding*, but frequently dart up an Ejaculation to Heaven

Eph. i. 17. for the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledg of Christ :

Psal. cxix. 18. That the Veil being taken off from your Hearts, and your Eyes being open'd, you may behold the wonderful things contain'd in God's Law. If ever you rightly understand the things that are freely given you of God, you must receive not the Spirit of this World, but the Spirit which is of God. None but the same Spirit who indited the Scriptures, can lead us into a saving Knowledg of them : For the natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness to him,

<sup>x</sup> Cor. ii. 14.

and

and he cannot know them, because they Serm. I.  
are spiritually discern'd. St. Paul u u  
very well knew the agreeable  
connexion between these two Pas-  
sages, Consider what I say, and the <sup>2</sup> Tim. ii.7.  
Lord give thee Understanding in all  
things.

Religious Hearing, when duly  
perform'd, is a very active, labo-  
rious Duty, and will find the Soul  
full Employment. And indeed how  
can it be expected that such dark  
Creatures as we are, should under-  
stand the sublime and important  
Truths of the Gospel, without the  
closest Attention of Mind and In-  
tenseness of Thought? But the  
absolute Necessity, Excellence, and  
Usefulness of this Knowledg will  
abundantly recompense all our Pains  
in getting it.

4. Where there is a due Atten-  
dance, there will be a firm *Affent*  
of the Mind to what is preach'd,  
as far as it's agreeable to the Word  
of God. It is one thing, notio-  
nally to know and understand the  
sense and meaning of what we  
hear, and another to believe the  
truth and certainty of it. The  
former without the latter, will be

Serm. I. of little advantage : for the Word  
<sup>Heb. iv. 2.</sup> does not profit, unless it be mix'd  
with Faith in them that hear it. It  
wrought effectually in the Thessalonians,  
who believ'd and receiv'd it, not as  
<sup>1 Thess. ii. 13.</sup> the Word of Men, but as it is in  
Truth the Word of God. I do not say  
that you are bound immediately to  
receive every thing as Divine  
Truth which your Ministers deliver  
to you ; they are fallible Men, and  
may mistake in the Interpretation  
of Scripture. The best and wisest  
of them know but in part ; you must  
call no Man on Earth Lord and Mas-  
ter. Your Faith is not to stand in  
the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power  
of God. He has given you a Judg-  
ment of Discretion, which you  
may and must exercise for your  
selves.

There is indeed a becoming De-  
ference due to the Judgment of  
your Ministers, such as Learners  
owe to their Teachers. When they  
have not forfeited their Reputation  
for Wisdom and Integrity, what  
they say should have great Weight  
and Authority with you. You are  
bound seriously to consider what  
they offer ; and nothing but plain  
Evidence

Evidence to the contrary should Serm. I.  
make you reject that as false, which  
they propose to you as the Word  
of God. You should be jealous of  
your selves, sensible of their greater  
Advantages for knowing the  
Will of God, and the awful Obliga-  
tions they lie under, not knowing-  
ly and wilfully to deceive and im-  
pose upon you. If they keep close  
to their Commission, as they ought  
to do, they will teach you nothing  
but what Christ has reveal'd and  
commanded. And whilst they do  
so, if their Message in matters of  
Weight and Moment be rejected by  
you, you will be inexcusable in your  
Infidelity; some corrupt Disposi-  
tion of Mind, and not want of  
sufficient Evidence, will be the  
Cause of it.

A *human* Faith is lawful and use-  
ful in its Place, and is usually a  
necessary Step and Preparative to  
that which is Divine. This is due  
to the Testimony of your faithful  
Ministers; tho' you are not to rest  
there, or to take things wholly upon  
Trust from them: But having first  
establish'd your selves in the Be-  
lief of the written Word, you must  
endea-

Serm. I. endeavour to discern the Divine Evidences of every Truth, by comparing it with that. All the great and weighty Truths of Religion are so plainly contain'd in the Scriptures, and have such bright Characters of Divinity stamp'd upon them, that it will be difficult for those who heartily believe the one, to withhold their Consent from the other. So far as what is preach'd is agreeable to Scripture, it must be receiv'd with a Divine Faith as the Word of God. Tho our Sermons are not wholly compos'd of Scripture-Expressions, yet when they contain nothing but the Sense of Scripture, they are truly his Mind and Will. It is not barely the Words themselves, but the Divine Truths cloth'd with them, to which we are to yield the Obedience of Faith.

5. This includes a *discerning* of our own Concern in what is preach'd, with an Application of it to our selves. The Gospel does not treat of things which are foreign to us, but contains such as are of the highest personal Concern, and of the last Importance to us.

us. It is a *Glass* or *Mirror* to discover Serm. I. to us the true State and Condition, Temper and Complexion of our own Souls. We hear in vain, unless we come with a Design and Desire to see in this *Glass* *what manner of Persons we are*. Every one should hear *for himself*, and not transfer to others such Counsels and Instructions, such Convictions and Reproofs, Comforts and Encouragements, as are suitable to their own Case. It is a great Fault in some Hearers, that they apply nothing to themselves; they come to Sermons only to be entertain'd with the Wit and Parts, or with the Weakness and Defects of the Preacher, or only to be furnish'd with Matter for Discourse afterwards. They amuse themselves with observing his Stile, Gesture and Delivery, how the Parts of his Discourse hang together, and how upon the whole he acquits himself in the performance. And when the Sermon is ended, they pass their Censures, as it happens to be either agreeable or disagreeable to their Fancies and Inclinations; never considering all this while, that he is setting before them

Serm. I. them *Life and Death, Blessing and Curse*, and that the *Words* they hear will *judg them another day.*

There are others who are for applying every thing to themselves, without considering whether it really belongs to them or no. On the one hand, how many secure and presumptuous Sinners catch at and run away with the Comforts of the Word, tho they are intirely destitute of the Qualifications of the Persons describ'd in the Promises? On the other, how many serious but melancholy Christians are apt to apply the Threatnings and Terrors of it to themselves, and to put the Comforts of it far from them? And thus thro a Misapplication, some are made sad, whose Hearts God would not have made sad; and others speak *Peace and Safety* to themselves, when sudden *Destruction* is near at hand. Persons must be first acquainted with the true State of their own Case, and the Tenour of the Covenant of Grace, and must compare these together; before they can make a judicious Application of the Promises or Threatnings of it.

We

We must also consider in Hearing, how far we are concern'd in the Duties recommended, or chargeable with the Sins caution'd against : and so far as we find our selves guilty either of omitting the one, or committing the other, we should readily submit to Conviction, and take it home to our selves ; and even be beforehand with the Application of the Preacher, every one saying to his own Soul, *I am the Man :* whoever the Minister meant, the Spirit of God certainly meant me, and has in kindness to my Soul sent this Message to me.

But when there is no immediate Suitableness between the Word preach'd, and the present State and Temper of the Soul, religious Hearers discern the general Usefulness of it ; for there is no Divine Truth but what we are some way or other concern'd in, and may be profited by. As Ministers must preach, so you must be willing to hear the whole Counsel of God : All <sup>2</sup> Tim. iii. 16. Scripture is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness. It is a great Fault in some Christians,

Serm. I. that they are willing to hear only  
some particular sorts of Divine  
Truths, and think they are never  
edify'd unless such be insisted on; but every part of God's Will has  
its special Use, the Law as well as  
the Gospel, for that is our School-  
master to bring us to Christ: and till  
by means of this a Sense of Sin abounds,  
the superabounding Grace of the Gospel will not be duly va-  
lu'd by us. It is very necessary and  
useful for Saints sometimes to hear  
those Truths which are more im-  
mediately directed to Sinners, and  
for Sinners at other times to hear  
of the Privileges and Happiness of  
real Saints. We are to hear not  
only for the present, but for the  
time to come; we must be laying  
in a Stock of spiritual Knowldg,  
that upon all proper occasions we  
may be able to bring out of our Tre-  
asure things new and old. Many have  
experienc'd the Sweetness and Ad-  
vantage of a particular Truth long  
after they have first heard it. Evey-  
ry Word of God is precious and va-  
luable, and will be esteem'd so by  
those who give a due Attendance  
on it.

6. This includes in it the *Excitation* and Exercise of such devout <sup>Serm. I.</sup> ~~Concern~~ *Affections*, as are suitable to the nature of the Truths we hear, and our own Concern in them. God expects that our affectionate as well as intellectual Powers should be hallow'd and consecrated to his Service ; and there is something in the Word which is as proper to excite the Passions and Affections, as to enlighten the Mind, and convince the Judgment : *The Hearts of the Disciples did burn within them,* whilst <sup>Luke xxiv. 32.</sup> Christ talk'd to them by the way, and whilst he open'd to them the Scripture. It is next to impossible we should know and believe the Nature and Excellence of Divine Truth, and the vast Concern it is of to us, and not be deeply affected with it ; or if this were possible, yet it would be a high Provocation and Affront to the blessed God, to sit like inanimate sensless Statues under the sound of such Doctrines as are of the most awful or amiable Nature : that Knowldg and Faith must be very slight and superficial, which has no power to communicate Life and Warmth to the Affections.

Serm. I. It is not enough barely to be affected under the Word, unless the *Weight* and *Importance* of what we hear be the chief Spring of it. It must not be the Softness and Elegancy of the Words with which Truth is cloth'd, or the external Manner in which it is deliver'd; tho' these may have their use when kept within due Bounds, and suited to the Nature of Things. But plain Truth, propos'd to us without much Colour or Art, ought to make the deepest Impressions upon us. It appears to a sound Mind the most beautiful and attractive in its own native Light and Lustre, it needs not to be set off with borrow'd Ornaments: for Persons to be more taken with the external Dress in which it appears, than with its own intrinsick Beauty and Excellence, argues a weak and distemper'd Mind. Those Affections which are this way excited, have little of true Piety and Devotion in them. They generally soon vanish and expire, without leaving any suitable and abiding Effects behind them. *Ezekiel's* Hearers were greatly taken with his Voice and Manner

Manner of Delivery ; he was to them Serm. I.  
as a very lovely Song, of one that had  
a pleasant Voice, and could play well  
on an Instrument : but notwithstanding  
this their Delight and Pleasure,  
their Hearts went after their Covetousness,  
and therefore they only  
heard his Words, but did them not.

Ezek. xxxiii  
31, 32.

Further, as the Matter and Substance of Truths should be the chief thing that affect us ; so those pious Affections, which are stirring in us under the Word, should be suitable to the Nature of the Subject we hear. God's Word consists of several Parts, some are more adapted to excite one kind of Affections, and others those of another. We should be careful that every Truth produce and excite such as are proper to its nature, and the relation it bears to us. The whole of Divine Revelation is the proper Object of Faith ; and wherever true Faith is, it will affect the Soul according to the different Nature and Quality of its Object. Noah's Faith in God's Threatnings of a Deluge, mov'd him with Fear, and put him upon preparing an Ark to the saving of his House. The Denunciation of Judgments

Heb. xi. 7.

Serm. I. ments should excite a holy Fear and Trembling, and an earnest desire and care to escape the Miseries threaten'd. Discoveries of Sin and Wrath should beget Shame and Sorrow, Humiliation and Contrition of Soul; and the Displays of Gospel-Grace in our *Lord Jesus Christ* should excite Hope and Trust, and inflame the Soul with Love and Joy, Praise and Thankfulness. So when any of the Precepts or Prohibitions of the Word are laid before us, they should draw forth our Esteem, Approbation and Love, being all *holy, just and good*; and make us to hate every *false way*. Several of the Prophets of old seem to have been affected themselves, according to the nature of the Message they were charg'd with. The Prophet *Habakkuk*, when he was sent to denounce very awful and tremendous Judgments, tells us,

*Hab. iii. 16.* *His Belly trembled, his Lips quiver'd, Rottenness enter'd into his Bones, he trembled in himself, that he might rest in the day of Trouble.* So the Word

*Jer. xx. 9.* *of the Lord was to Jeremiah like burning Fire shut up in his Bones.* These were plain Indications how they ought

## Hearing the Word.

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cought to be affected to whom these Serm. I.  
Messages were sent. And thus it should be with Ministers and Hearers in our Day: and this would be a Temper highly pleasing and acceptable to God, and would intitle them to that gracious Promise, wherein he says, that *to such he will look, as are poor and of a contrite Spirit, and who tremble at his Word.* Isa. lxvi. 2.

7. And Lastly, This includes a ready *Subjection* of Soul to the Word, with a firm *Resolution* to obey and practise it. We must not only believe its Truth, and be affected with its Goodness, but submit to the Authority of God speaking in it, obeying from the Heart Rom. vi. 17. that *Form of Doctrine which is delivered you, or unto which you ought to be deliver'd.* This Submission and Resolution must extend to the whole Will of God, without exception or reserve; what the People promis'd Jeremiah should be the real Sense and Language of your Hearts: Whether it be Good, or Jer. xlvi. 6. whether it be Evil, we will obey the Voice of the Lord our God to whom we send thee, that it may be well with us when we obey the Voice of the Lord

Serm. I. our God. Cornelius and his Friends told Peter, that they were all present before God, to hear all things that are commanded him of God. Hearing is a Duty that does not terminate in it self, but is an instrumental means of something more noble and excellent. Knowldg and Obedience are the two great Ends of Hearing. If Knowldg be the more near and immediate, Obedience is the more principal and ultimate; for Knowldg it self is but a means in order to that. They who satisfy themselves with bare Hearing, without doing of the Word, do but *deceive their own Souls*; how much soever they may remember, or whatever Proficiency they may make in Knowldg, in the Language of the Apostle, they are but *forgetful Hearers.*

Jam. i. 22,  
23, &c.

I deny not but Hearing may be, and sometimes is an effectual means of changing Sinners into the Image of the glorious Objects they converse with. This also is a Duty, wherein God's own People do oft receive gracious Communications from him. But whenever these are real, and not feign'd, they always

ways have an Influence upon their Serm. I: After-Conduct; *that* seeming Affection and Devotion under the Word is little to be regarded, which suffers Men to go on in the wilful Omission of Duty, and Commission of Sin, against the plain repeated Calls and Prohibitions of it. There is that near Connexion between hearing and obeying, that, in Scripture-Language, the one is oft put for the other: *Hear, and* <sup>Isa. iv. 2.</sup> *your Souls shall live.* So to hear the Rod, is to regard and comply with the Design of God in it. In his account none hear, but those that obey.

Christianity is a practical thing. Gospel-Truths are not only or chiefly reveal'd and preach'd, that they may be known and contemplated, as Matters of pure Speculation, but that they may sanctify the Heart, and govern the Life. Its Doctrines, Promises and Threatnings, as well as Precepts and Prohibitions, have a direct Influence upon our Practice. There is no Divine Truth so sublime and mysterious, as to be purely speculative. When the great Principles of Religion,

Serm. I. ligion, Natural or Reveal'd, are  
insisted on, they lay a foundation  
for, and furnish us with proper Mo-  
tives to inforce the Duties of Ho-  
liness and Obedience. The Exer-  
cise of some Grace, or the Practice  
of some Duty or other, will be the  
proper Application of such Doc-  
trines; and consequently it will be  
our own Fault, if we do not go a-  
way from every Sermon better Per-  
sons than we came. Where a De-  
sign and Resolution of Obedience is  
wanting, the very End of Hearing  
is forgot: such certainly can never  
be said to give a due Attendance.  
The difference between obedient  
and disobedient Hearers, is in an  
elegant and moving manner fet  
forth by our blessed Saviour, at the  
close of his excellent Sermon upon

Mat. vii. 24,  
25, 26, 27. the Mount; *Whosoever heareth these  
Sayings of mine, and doth them, I  
will liken him unto a wise Man,  
which built his House upon a Rock; and  
the Rain descended, and the Floods  
came, and the Wind blew, and beat  
upon that House, and it fell not; for  
it was founded upon a Rock. But e-  
very one that heareth, and doth them  
not,*

not, is like to a foolish Man, which built his House upon the Sand; and the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew and beat upon that House, and it fell, and great was the Fall of it.

To conclude :

From this Account of the Nature of Hearing, it appears that this Duty is not so easy to be perform'd, as the Generality take it to be. And it is greatly to be fear'd, that among the vast Crouds of visible Hearers, the number of religious ones is very small. The Countenances and Carriage of too many in Hearing, and the disobedient Lives of more at other times, is too plain a Proof of this. How few discover that Attention, Affection and Subjection of Soul which this Duty carries in it? This ought to be for a Lamentation, and we should all be excited to the conscientious Discharge of it on our part; for neither the Difficulty of Performance, or other Mens Carelessness and Remissness therein, can be any Excuse for us, if we neglect that

Serm. I. that which we are many ways indispensably oblig'd to.

What those Obligations are, will be the Subject of the following Sermon.

**THE**

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THE  
OBLIGATIONS  
TO

*Hearing the Word.*

*Grosvenor, Benj.*

---

SERMON II.

---

JAMES I. 19.

*Wherefore, my beloved Brethren,  
let every Man be swift to Hear.*

**I**N stating the Nature of this Duty, it has been suppos'd, that there is a standing Revelation of the Mind of God, which is the Rule of our Faith and Practice, and of our future Judgment; that I am therefore infinitely concern'd

Serm. II. cern'd to be acquainted with it, to understand the true meaning and import of it. It has been also suppos'd, that there are some Persons whose Office and Business it is to search and study this Revelation, in order to a surer Knowledg of its Meaning, and a more distinct Acquaintance with its Doctrines and Discoveries; and withal, that you have Capacity and Opportunity of enjoying the Fruits of their Enquiries. The Position that rises out of all this, and which I am to prove, may be laid down thus: That it is the Duty of those who have *Ears to hear*, and Opportunity, in a religious manner, and with suitable Affections, to hear the Word of God preach'd, (*i. e.*) explain'd and apply'd by those whose Office it is, and who are qualify'd and appointed thereto.

My Business is not with any Cases of Conscience about Hearing, to tell you how often, or in what manner you should Hear; nor am I going to prove the divine Appointment of any particular Mode of Preaching, whether it be by Exposition, Homily, Tractate, Postil,

or

or Catechism : The Apostles themselves vary'd the manner of their Preaching, according to the Reason of the Case and Occasion, the Quality and Circumstance of the Auditory. Sometimes they expounded the Scriptures, especially when they had to do with those who acknowledg'd them. Sometimes they reason'd out of the Scriptures. Sometimes they deliver'd a set Speech or Oration ; as in that Sermon of St. Paul to the *Athenians*, wherein are all the Parts of an Oration in their orderly disposition ; the noblest Turns of Thought ; the greatest Strength of Reason ; not disdaining proper Quotations upon them from some of their own Authors ; the handsomest and most critical Modes of Transition in the World, with all the other Beautys of Eloquence that are to be found in the whole Art ; equal to the finest Pieces of Oratory that ever were deliver'd in *Athens* it self, and consequently in the whole World.

Sometimes they us'd the way of Conference and Interlocution, a manner of Preaching which their extraordinary Spirit qualify'd them for,

Serm.II. for, as it supply'd and furnish'd them for all sudden Occasions that could offer, and gave them a Mouth and a Wisdom, which their Adversary could never be too hard for. However, all these Modes which they us'd fall in with the general Nature of Preaching the Word; that is, explaining and proving of Truth, rehearsing and improving the History of the Birth and Mission, the Life and Actions, the Character and Authority of the Lord Jesus Christ; his Sufferings, Death and Burial; Resurrection and Ascension; sitting at God's Right Hand; his Laws, Doctrines and Institutions, and his coming to Judgment. This was what they call'd *preaching Christ*. They stated his Doctrines, and inforc'd his Commands. The whole Revelation of God's Mind to them was their general *Text*, as now 'tis ours: Upon that they argu'd, explain'd, reprov'd, rebuk'd with all Authority; that is, according to the Word of God. This is that *Preaching the Word* which the Apostles practis'd, and the Preachers of their Day; however distinguish'd by the several

ral Names of *Prophecying*, *Preaching*, *Teaching*, *Evangelizing*; the critical differences of which I need not enquire into: The same for Substance, Matter, and Kind which is still continu'd to us, and which we are oblig'd to attend; for there is a Curse denounc'd against the Preachers of a *New Gospel* and the Rejecters of the *Old*.

In representing the proper Evidence of this Duty, which is generally taken for granted, I shall consider not only the more direct and immediate Proof, but such as is consequential, and may be infer'd from other things. For that is unquestionable Truth, which may be infer'd from some other Truth, as well as that which is more directly asserted and express'd. The Considerations from whence this matter may be fairly argu'd, as things that necessarily suppose this Duty, or some way or other refer to it, may be laid together under these two general Heads. It may be argu'd,

I. *From some Considerations taken from the Nature of the Duty, as stated before.*

II.



II. From such Scripture-Accounts of it as make it appear, the Command of God, and the Appointment of Christ.

I. We argue from some Considerations taken from the Nature of the Duty, as stated before.

§. I. Such Hearing the Word is a proper Act of Worship, and of due Homage to God.

What is Worship, but the acknowledgment of the Divine Perfections by such Affections of Soul, and Behaviour of Body, and such Solemnity of both, as is suitable to the Perfections that are the Object and Ground of Worship; and from whence it derives both its Obligation, and the respective manner of Performance? Thus Prayer is worshipping God, because therein we acknowledg the Perfections of Omnipotence, Power and Goodness, &c. So the Goodness of his Providence and the Excellence of his Nature, are acknowledg'd by Praise. Every part of proper Worship has reference to some Perfection in the Object we adore, and whom, by such acknowledgment we properly worship.

worship. Now the infinite Know- Serm.H.  
ledg of God, as the Father of Lights,  
and his Authority over us as our  
Sovereign Lord, are properly ac-  
knowledg'd by hearkning to his  
Word, that we may know his Will,  
and do it. 'Tis but due Respect  
to a Superior to hear what he has  
to say to us: And if by reason of  
the sublimity of the Matter, or the  
weakness of our Capacity, there be  
any difficulty, especially if mix'd  
with Danger attending the Mistake,  
'tis still but the same Respect con-  
tinu'd, to use the best means to un-  
derstand our Governour; especially  
if we have reason to think those  
Means not only a proper Way, but  
also a part of his signify'd Will. I  
acknowledg my Subjection and his  
Supremacy, and Right to dictate  
and prescribe; my Darknes, his  
Light; my Ignorance, his Wisdom  
and Knowledg.

§. 2. *He has a right to the Atten-  
tion of our Ear, and the Service  
of that Organ of our Body, as  
well as of the other Senses and  
Powers of it which he has made.*

*He that made the Ear, shall not he  
be heard? Shall not he be wor-  
ship'd*

Serm.II. ship'd with the Ear he has made?  
~~~~ This is a natural Reason, but 'tis adopted into Scripture, and urg'd and inculcated to this purpose in many places. *He that hath Ears to bear, let him hear:* q. d. If there be any thing in the World that deserves or demands Attention, upon all the accounts that are Valuable and Weighty; if ever you regarded any thing in the World, or listen to any thing with Closeness and Attention; if you have any think like an *Hearing Faculty*; if you have any such Power about you; better you had no such Sense as that of Hearing, than not use it in Hearing the Word. *He that hath Ears to bear, let him hear.* It is a loud *Summons* of Attention, and carries an Air of *Vehemence* and *Importunity* in the Speaker, as having his Heart much set upon it, and laying the weight of his Authority upon it. *He that hath an Ear to bear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches,* by what way, and in what manner soever he speaks.

This Reason goes upon this Principle, That every Faculty of our Soul,

Soul, and Power of our Bodies are Serm.II.
to be employ'd for God, and us'd
in his Service. 'Tis highly reasonable
and fit even to natural Light,
that God should be honour'd by
all the Powers of our Nature which
he hath given us; and that they
should be consecrated to his Wor-
ship, according to their respective
Fitness and Capacity for it. Thus,
as we have Eyes to see, by which
we behold his Works, and read his
Word; and Tongues to speak and
sing his Praise; so we have *Ears*
to hear him speaking, in a manner
wherein he does most particularly
address himself to the *hearing Ear*.
A Sense that was not bestow'd up-
on us to serve our selves only in
the Affairs of Life, or please our
selves with the Melody of Art in
the pleasant Songs of the Children
of Men, but that we should hearken
to the *Voice of the Charming, charm-*
ing so sweetly; and that wherever
God finds a Tongue to speak, we
should find an Ear to hear. Espe-
cially if to this we add, that,

§. 3. *The Obligations and End of*
Hearing the Word at all, any
way, and the Purposes of doing
so,

*so, are the same with those of
Hearing the Word preach'd.*

He that commands me to search the Scriptures, does thereby command me to use the best Helps in that search. He that has said to the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to them, &c. supposes something else said besides the very Letter; and also supposes, that if it be according to Law I am bound to receive it, by the same Authority that warrants my rejecting it, if it be not so.

Christ's Command is, *Hear and Understand*: The Duty is carry'd further than mere Hearing, or Reading, even the Word of his own Mouth. I am bound to understand, without which the reading, or hearing it read, has no Fruit; and the Revelation it self would be insignificant as to its best Purposes.

Understandest thou what thou readest?
And he said, How can I except some Man should guide me? The knowledg of God's Nature and Will, a Divine Temper or Conformity to it, are the ends of Reading or Hearing the Word of God. Neither of which can be expected from the mere Letter,

Letter, which profiteth not, unless Serm.II.
the Spirit quickens, and the inward
Sense and Meaning perceiv'd, pur-
su'd and apply'd, transform the
Soul into the Temper of the things
treated of, and it becomes *an ingrafted Word*, (*i. e.*) each part of
it be respectively inserted into its
proper Faculty, and readily yield-
ing its suitable Fruits, as if it were
a part of our selves.

Besides, 'tis the *Sense of Scripture*
that is the *Word of God*, rather
than the Letter or Syllables of it;
or else we could not call our English
Bible the *Word of God*. Even the
Apostles themselves, in delivering
to us what we are to own for the
Word of God, did not always con-
fine themselves to the Literal words
spoken by Christ, when they had
the Sense; consequently, where the
Mind of God, and the certain mean-
ing of the Text is deliver'd, *that*
is the Word of God, so far as 'tis
his Mind and the Sense of Scrip-
ture, whether it be the Syllables
of it or no. Nay further, the
matter will unavoidably run up to
this Necessity of hearing the Word
Explain'd or Preach'd upon, by
E others,

Serm.II. others, or our selves; for every
one that reads will be aiming at
the Sense, will attempt some Pa-
raphrase in his own Mind, and be
so far a Preacher to himself, as to
say in himself, *the meaning of this is*
so or so: he can't avoid it, it
ought to be so, otherwise Reading
it can't be a reasonable Service;
but would be all one as if it were in
an unknown Tongue: Which Sense
and Meaning which we have drawn
out, we conclude to be the Mind of
God, and so far only his Word as
it expresses his Mind. And whe-
ther this is not better done by
Preaching, and whether Persons in
Hearing the Word so Preach'd, will
not more directly and surely come
at the Mind of God, which is the
very End and Design of all read-
ing it; is refer'd to any impartial
Judg. Even they who least own
the Obligations of Hearing the
Word preach'd, and tell us 'tis
Hearing enough to hear the Read-
ing of it only, and the only Hear-
ing the Scripture requires; and
thereupon undertake to give us ano-
ther Sense of those Places we al-
leg'd in Proof of this Duty, as
stated

stated above; and endeavour to Serm.II.
state the meaning of those Places,
and to reason and argue upon
them: do they not thereby con-
fute themselves, and confirm the
Necessity of Hearing something fur-
ther than the Text? Since they
descend to use a Method for our
Instruction, Information, and Cor-
rection; which is what we call
Preaching. And may not others
need some such Help in other Mat-
ters of Religion, and Parts of Scrip-
ture, as they suppose we do in the
Case in Question?

§. 4. *The natural Darkness and
Weakness of Mens Minds, fur-
ther proves the Necessity of this
Hearing the Word.*

Some are slow of Understanding,
and of weak Intellectuals. They
take in the Knowldg of Divine
Things, not without some Diffi-
culty, and by slow Degrees. They
need the most familiar and easy
Representations of the Truths al-
ready reveal'd, and the most ad-
vantageous conveyance and accom-
modation of them to their Minds.

Others are sluggish and heavy,
dull of Hearing: There are many
E 2 things

Serm.II. things hard to be utter'd, seeing ye are
~~are~~ dull of Hearing. Their Affections
are apt to flag and cool. Their good Impressions easily abate and wear off. They need often to be stir'd up afresh, and to have the former Convictions reviv'd and strengthen'd.

Feb. v. 11.
Others are of weak Memory, and soon forget what they hear, and need to have the same things often repeated to keep them in their Minds, and to have a kindly effect upon their Hearts. They need Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept; and to have their pure Minds frequently stir'd up by way of Remembrance. The best of us know but in Part, and the most enlarg'd Minds are so clogg'd and confin'd, as not presently to take in the whole compass of Divine Truth in a regular Order, and in the Connexion of Things; and will continually need further Assistance and Help, either for knowing more, or in a better manner, or to better purpose, what we know already.

There are great Reaches and Depths of Sacred Truth, that require the deepest Search, and the closest Attention

tention of Mind. Few Men arrive Serm.II.
to that Exactness and Perfection of
Christian Knowledg, as to be above
the Instructions of the Preaching
the Word. However, to be sure
there are none above the need of
Hearing them again, of having
them represented and inculcated a-
fresh, in order to a fresh Savour,
and a further Benefit and Improve-
ment by them. So plain a mistake
is it of those who think that the
Use of Preaching and Hearing the
Word, is only to deliver or hear
something New; that the Apostles
themselves, who were the first Pro-
mulgers of the Gospel, did not al-
ways do so. *To write the same* Phil. iii. 1
things to you, to me indeed is not
grievous, but for you 'tis safe. Where-
fore I will not be negligent to put you ^{2 Pet. i. 12}
always in Remembrance of these things,
tho you do know them, and tho
you be establish'd in the present Truths.
And I my self also am persuaded of ^{Rom. xv.}
you, my Brethren, that ye also are ^{14, 15.}
full of Goodness, fill'd with all Know-
ledg, able also to admonish one another.
Nevertheless, Brethren, I have writ-
ten to you more largely, putting you
in mind. I have not written unto ^{1 John ii.}
you ^{21.}

Serm. II. you because you know not the Truth,
 ~~~~~ but because you KNOW IT; (i. e.)

I would revive it in your Memorys,  
 and establish you in it more and  
 more. And since neither the for-  
 mal Notion of Preaching the Gos-  
 pel, nor the Reason and End of it  
 lies in delivering something never  
 known before; it follows, that the  
 Reason and Obligation of Hearing  
 the Word preach'd, derive not  
 merely from the addition it may be  
 to our Knowledg, but also from  
 the certain Service and Use it is of  
 to what we already know, in relief  
 of the Weakness of our Mind, for  
 renewing Conviction, and reviving  
 it upon our Memorys; for the live-  
 lier Savour and Relish of Divine  
 Truth, and the deeper Impression  
 of it upon our Spirit. 'Tis an Ob-  
 ject which we are not to carry the  
 Eye over, and survey once or twice  
 as we do a Picture or a Show, and  
 then fastidiously turn away from  
 it, and say, We have seen it alrea-  
 dy: but what we are to be cast  
 into as into a Mould \*; to be fa-

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\* Rom. vi. 17. *Eis δι ωμοδοντε.*

miliar with as the Rule of Life, as Serm. II.  
our Bread and our Food.

§. 5. I argue from the natural Aptitude there is in the Preaching and Hearing the Word so preach'd, to all the purposes of its Revelation.

We are bound to use the most apt and effectual Means we can come at, for Knowledg and Goodness; and that the Duty we are recommending is such, cannot be deny'd by any who consider the Case. The Persons officiating are usually bred up in the Schools of the Prophets, have made it their business to read and study the Word of God; even from Children have they known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise to Salvation, and to make the Man of God perfect to every good Work. They are instructed in those original Languages in which the Oracles of God were first deliver'd: from whence they are able to take the surer Sense of the Holy Ghost, without a precarious and hazardous Dependance upon others; and are able also to discern the Emphasis, Force, and Beauty that is often couch'd in the Peculiarities

Serm.II. of that Speech which the Holy  
Ghost was pleas'd to make use of.  
Add to this, their Acquaintance  
with those Arts and Sciences that  
enable them to form more distinct  
Conceptions of Things, that fur-  
nish a greater Propriety, as well as  
Clearness of Speech: then, they *give  
themselves up to these things,* and so  
*by reason of Use, have their Senses  
exercis'd to discern Spiritual things:*  
besides their own spiritual Relish,  
likely to be stronger in them than  
in other Christians; by this means  
their very natural Capacities are en-  
larg'd and improv'd. These things  
make the *aptiness to teach,* which Ti-  
mothy was to look after, in those  
whom he was to ordain. These  
were at first in great measure sup-  
ply'd by Miracle to the first Preach-  
ers of the Gospel, as several other  
Gifts were; which proves their re-  
quisiteness when obtain'd in an or-  
dinary way. Again, the manner  
of delivering the Word preach'd  
by a living Voice, suitable Gestures,  
close Application, as it were Face  
to Face, with becoming Vehemence,  
Urgency, and apparent Concern,  
has something in it more piercing  
and

and efficacious, than mere Reading the Word, or any other manner of Address, as might be largely prov'd; from the Consideration of its being the way God has chose out, and bless'd with the happiest Effects upon the Souls of Men. Which leads me to the sixth and last Consideration.

*§. 6. From the Advantages and Benefits of such Hearing the Word as we have describ'd.*

The particular Benefits of Hearing will be consider'd in another Discourse; it will be sufficient for me to observe here, as the ground of my Argument, that the Word is originally design'd for our Profit, and that we may grow thereby as well as be born; it has peculiar Advantages proper to it self, as every other Appointment of his Worship has: And we may warrantably expect that Benefit from it, by a due Attendance, which we cannot expect from any other Ordinance. The Errand it comes upon, is the noblest in the World; whether you consider what it recovers us from, or what it forms us unto. The Holy Scripture is rich and copious,

Serm. III.

Serm.II. ous, in representing the exceeding  
~~~~~ Advantages of it to the Souls of  
Men ; it's that which begins the *New Birth*, and feeds the *Divine Life*. It has all the Advantages of
Reading the Word, with a great
deal more. The *Sense* of Scripture
is drawn out by the Helps before
mention'd ; a *distribution* is made
of the Matter into several Parts,
to prevent Confusion : it is *confirm'd* by Scripture, and the Reason
of things ; *illustrated* by proper Si-
militudes and Representations ; 'tis
urg'd and inculcated with Warmth
and Zeal upon our Consideration
and Practice. And is not this calcu-
lated for such Services ? Such Disco-
very of the Will of God, such Ma-
nifestations of his Favour, such
clearer Inlightning of the Mind,
and Refreshment in a Christian
Course, as is not ordinarily attaina-
ble any other way ? 'Tis for this
good Reason that the Scripture re-
presents it by things of the most
absolute Necessity, as well as some-
time by those of the greatest De-
licacy and Fineness ; as the *Light*
to the Eye, the *Food*, *strong Meat*
for grown Men, and *Milk for Babes*,
and

and Bread for all. Sweeter than the Serm. II: Honey, or the Honey-Comb, and more precious than fine Gold. Comparisons that represent it necessary to all in general, and suited to each one in particular, of whatsoever growth or standing.

Now the Argument lies here: If Hearing the Word be a Means of such spiritual Good, then it must needs be our necessary Duty; for we are certainly oblig'd to take care of our Souls, and to use all proper Means to promote their Welfare. And if there were no other Consideration, this alone were sufficient, both to convince the Judgment, and dispose the Mind; the Good that we may hope to get by it, and which it is appointed and adapted to convey.

This is the Apostle's Argument in the Text, *Wherefore, my beloved Brethren, let every Man be swift to hear.* And why? because ver. 18. *Of his own Will begat he us with the Word of Truth,* that we should be a kind of first-Fruits of his Creatures. *Wherefore, my beloved Brethren, let every Man be swift to Hear.* This is spoken to Persons already converted,

James i. 18,
19.

Serm.II. verted, Begotten thro the Word of
 ~~~~~ Truth, to some of the best of Men.

And the Duty is urg'd upon them,  
 tho of that Character, and of those  
 Attainments, from the Considera-  
 tion of its Benefit and Advantage,  
 what it had done, and would fur-

James i. 21. ther do for us. Wherefore laying a-

side all Filthiness and superfluity of  
 Naughtiness, receive with Meekness  
 the ingrafted Word, which is able to  
 save your Souls. And after Direc-  
 tion for doing the Word, as well as  
 bearing it, he closes the Exhortation  
 from the same Argument with  
 Ver. 25. which he begun ; Who so looketh into  
 the perfect Law of Liberty, and continueth therein, not contenting him-  
 self with having heard unto some  
 certain measure of Attainment,  
 either of Knowledg or Holiness,  
 but continueth therein, he being not  
 a forgetful Hearer, but a Doer of the  
 Work, this Man shall be bless'd in his  
 Deed.

II. I shall now argue the Obliga-  
 tions to Hearing the Word, from  
 such Scripture-accounts of it, as make  
 it appear to be the positive Command  
 of God, and Appointment of Christ.

Hearing

Hearing the Word was an ~~an-~~ Serm. II.  
tient Appointment under the Law: ~~~~~  
Part of the Worship of the Syna-  
gogue, which the Jews were bound  
to attend, as well as that of the  
Temple. They were requir'd not  
only to offer Sacrifices to God, but  
to attend the Reading and Ex-  
pounding of the Law; which was  
a standing part of their religious  
Worship. *Thou shalt observe dili-* Deut. xxiv.  
*gently, and do according to all that* <sup>8.</sup>  
*the Priests and Levites shall teach.*  
*They shall teach Jacob thy Judgments,* Ch. xxxiii.  
*and Israel thy Law. That ye may* <sup>10.</sup>  
*teach the Children of Israel all the* Lev. x. 11.  
*Statutes which the Lord hath spoken.*  
*So they read in the Law of God,* and Neh. viii.  
*gave the Sense, and caused them to* <sup>7, 8.</sup>  
*understand the Reading. And the*  
*Levites that taught the People, said*  
*unto ALL the People, This Day is*  
*Holy unto the Lord your God, mourn*  
*not, nor weep: for all the People wept,*  
*when they heard the words of the Law.*  
This was an Exposition of the Law,  
and a Dehortation grounded upon  
the Text; which demonstrates their  
Teaching was not only reading the  
Text, and rendring the Hebrew of  
it intelligible to them. And else-  
where,

Serm. II. where, *Thus saith the Lord, Ask now  
the Priests concerning the Law,* for a  
Hag. ii. 11. Resolution of a Case in their own  
Law, which could not be had but  
by Comment and Exposition: *For  
the Priest's Lips should keep Knowledge,  
and they should seek the Law at his  
Mouth; for he is the Messenger of the  
Lord of Hosts.* To enforce the  
Practice, and recover the Purity of  
which Law, the Prophets them-  
selves were sent by God; and all  
their Propheccys are so many Com-  
mentarys or Preachings upon the  
Law. And when you consider the  
difference of Stile, and manner of  
Address that is observable in the  
different Characters and Genius of  
the Prophets, it will appear that  
those Preachings which they call  
*the Word of the Lord,* have that  
august Name chiefly from the cer-  
tainty they had of its being agree-  
able to the Mind of God: from  
which they were by Inspiration se-  
cur'd from varying, either in Ex-  
pressions or Enlargements; under  
which security the Preacher was at  
liberty to search out acceptable  
words. *And moreover, because the  
Preacher was wise, he still taught the  
People*

People Knowledge; yea, he gave good Serm.II.  
heed, and sought out, and set in or-  
der many Proverbs, (seriously pon-  
der'd both Matter and Words.)

Ver. 10.

The Preacher sought to find out ac- Ver. 11.  
ceptable Words, and that which was  
written was Upright, even words of  
Truth (written in Sincerity, and a-  
greeable to the Mind and Will of  
God.) The Words of the wise are as  
Goads, and as Nails fasten'd by the  
Masters of the Assemblies, which are  
given from one Shepherd. Such words  
as made Ezekiel to be to the Chil-  
dren of his People as a very lovely  
Song, of one that has a pleasant Voice,  
and can play well on an Instrument:  
For they hear thy words, they come un-  
to thee as the People cometh, and they  
sit before thee as my People sit, and  
hear thy words. So that God's Peo-  
ple were us'd to come and sit and  
hear the Preachings of the Pro-  
phets.

Ecc. xxxiii.  
30, 31, 32.

And this further appears to have  
been the Custom of the Synagogue,  
from the Example of Christ; He  
taught in their Synagogues. And he  
came to Nazareth, where he had been  
brought up, and as his Custom was,  
he went into the Synagogue on the  
Sabbath-

Luke iv.  
15, 16, 22.

Serm. II. Sabbath-day, and stood up for to read.

And he read a part of Isaiah, who had prophesy'd of him, that he should preach the acceptable Year of the Lord. And when he had read he sat down, the Doctors being used to sit down to interpret and preach upon what they had read: and by Preaching upon the Text, he both expounded it and fulfill'd it at the same time. At Thessalonica there was a Synagogue of the Jews; and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath-days reason'd with them out of the Scriptures: opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffer'd and risen again; and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you, is Christ. He disputed with them upon a Subject, as I am doing now; opening the meaning of Scriptures, which were then said to be able to make one wise unto Salvation, and to carry in them eternal Life: Reasoning with them, and laying down Propositions, and supporting them with proper Evidence; and all this upon a Revelation already deliver'd, and with the Letter of which even his Audience were very well acquainted;

A&s xvii.

2, 3.

δελέγετο  
διανόησον  
πραγμάτων  
θεού

ted ; only they had a *Veil upon their Minds* in the reading of them, which the Apostle removes by preaching upon them. And that this Hearing and Preaching was not a carnal Ordinance, and proper to the Jewish Worship, but a standing Part of Christian Duty, appears,

§. 1. *From so many Directions, Cautions, Examples, Exhortations, and other Passages concerning Hearing, that leave no room for Doubt or Pretence of Cavil or Evasion.*

All these suppose the Duty it self as their Ground and Foundation. *He call'd the Multitude to him, and said, Hear and understand.* If he then commanded all that heard him to understand ; it is my Duty now to hear, that I may understand what he said then. It is stronger imply'd in the Caution, *Take heed how you hear.* It is suppos'd that we ought to hear the Word, otherwise the Ground of the Caution would be taken away. The Manner of this Duty being prescrib'd, supposes the Duty it self. We are also caution'd to take heed what we hear ; Mark iv. 24.

Serm.II. *hear*; a very needless Caution, if nothing were to be heard, but a written Word read. There are two beautiful Parables compos'd on purpose to represent the true *Manner* of this Duty, and the Consequences of its being well or ill done, which suppose the Guilt of not doing it at all;

*Mat. vii. 24. ing it at all; the One of the Wise and Foolish Builders; the Other of the*

*Ch. xiii. 19. Sower, and the Good and Bad Ground.*

Now if Men that hear the Word of God *and do it not*, are such *Foolish Builders*, what can they be who will not so much as hear? And if the Ground where the Seed perish'd is condemn'd, I suppose the Ground that never receives the Seed at all will not escape. We are coman-

*Heb. x. 25. ded not to forsake the assembling ourselves together as the manner of some is: And if any ask for what such Assemblies were, let the Apostles Custom and Practice, and that of the first Christians, inform his Fol-*

*A&s xx. 7. lowers; they met together the first*

*Cor.xvi. 2. Day of the Week, and Paul preach'd to them, and so they were to continue to do, even under their Ordinary Ministry: which suggests another Argument.*

§. 2. I argue from the Institution of the Gospel-Ministry. Serm.II.

That a Gospel-Ministry for the Use and Service of the Church, in its Doctrine and Administration, is the Appointment of Christ, has an Evidence in Scripture, that is not shaken nor weaken'd at all, by any Triumphs obtain'd over Characters which are not there to be found. The fuller the Proof is of the human Original of what is merely human, the clearer will be the Foundation of what is truly Divine; and such the distinct Character and Office of the Gospel-Ministry will appear, so long as we find their distinct \* *Work* specify'd, the *Extent* of it laid out and bounded, the distinct *Qualifications* for it describ'd, the *Duties* of the People towards them enjoin'd, the Persons that should ordinarily separate to this Work for continuing the Order pointed out, the *Subsistence* of the Persons in that Office in a very express and solemn manner provided for, and the *Duration*

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\* Vid. Dr. Calamy of the Ministry, at the End of his Inspiration of the Scripture.

Serm. II. of all this determin'd and secur'd;   
 ~~~~~ and all this as the Gift of a Bene-  
 factor, and as the Constitution of the
 Eph. iv. 11, Lawgiver.

^{12, 13.}

He gave some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ; till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ: (i. e.) He appointed both the Extraordinary and the Ordinary Ministers of his Kingdom. The Former for special Purposes and Seasons, the Latter for the standing Use and Benefit of the Church.

^{Cor.xii.38.}

^{Yobxv.}
^{Yobxvi.}

He hath set some in the Church; first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, thirdly Teachers. He gave as a Benefactor; to slight the Gift and neglect it, is Ingratitude. He set in the Church as a Lawgiver; to neglect them in their due Administrations, is Disobedience. Now the principal Branch of their Ministerial Office is to preach the Word; Preach the Word, be instant in Season and out of Season, exhort, reprove, rebuke, as well as announce.

ciate. Can any one think that all Serm. II.
this Sanction, and Circumstance,
and various Forms of Injunction,
are for inventing a New Gospel,
or the mere reading of the Old?
so much of our Canon of Scripture
employ'd in setting out the above-
mention'd Distinctions and Qualifi-
cations, only for what a Child
might do, or any one else that can
but read? Can that Office be Tem-
porary, or Occasional to the first
Times, which was so plainly asser-
ted to be given until the Body of
Christ is perfect, *for the perfecting*
of the Saints, till we come to the Mea-
sure of the Stature of the Fulness of
Christ? Is not that so long as there
are Members to be added to the
Body, or Graces to be added to
those Members of the Church?
Does not this give us the Sense of
that other Promise, *Lo I am with*
you alway to the End of the World?
Can our Lord be suppos'd to say,
Lo I am with you in the Works that
must last to the End of Time, Preach-
ing and Baptizing, unto the End
only of Jerusalem? Did they not
ordain Elders in every City to suc-
ceed them in this Work? Was it
not

Serm.II. not their Business to take heed to themselves and to their Flock, over which the Lord had made them Overseers, and to feed the Flock with Knowledge and Understanding ? To persuade Men, knowing the Terrors of the Lord ? To pray, beseech with all Long-Suffering, and in Christ's stead, that they would be reconcil'd to God ? And who is sufficient for these things ? Can that mean only a Sufficiency to rehearse, or merely read the written Word ? Do not the Comparisons, by which their Office and Work are represented, form an other-guise Idea ? Such as Pastors, or Shepherds, Soldiers, Watchmen, Stewards ? Do not these infer such a relation between Minister and People, as obliges you to give them Opportunity of discharging such their Office, as these Allusions express ? to submit to what they perform by his Commission, and to expect that Christ will ratify what is to be * perform'd by them within the Sphere of their Authority. But to what purpose is all this ? A

* Vid. Dr. Williams of the Nature and Necessity of a Gospel-Ministry.

Ministry so instituted, and this part Serm.II.
of their Office so strictly enjoin'd, ~~~~~
if Hearing the Word be not a Duty, how came we to be oblig'd, and you to be at liberty in this matter? Must we attend to this very thing constantly, and you not be bound to attend in the proper Seasons? Must we labour in the Word and Doctrine, to feed the Flock, to watch over Souls, as those that must give an Account, and you not be concern'd with us? Must they speak the things that become sound Doctrine? which (I observe again) he could not miss doing, if he were only to speak by fresh Inspiration, or to rehearse and read the former. Must he shew in Doc- Tit.i.
trine uncorruptness, gravity, and sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be gain-said, that the contrary Party may be ashamed? Must he speak, exhort, rebuke with all Authority, and let no Man despise him (which there was no room for, did he speak or read only Inspiration) and were they to give themselves to Reading and to Study, even in the Age of Miracles, Gifts, Prophecys, and Tongues, to give Attendance to Reading, to Ex-^{1 Tim.iii.13.}hortation,

Serm.II. hortation, to Doctrine, to meditate on
these things, and give up themselves
wholly to them, that their profiting may
appear, in order that the Man of
God may be Perfect, throughly fur-
nish'd to every Good Word and Work,
able to convince Gainsayers, a Work-
man that need not be ashame'd, rightly
dividing the Word of Truth? And
can any Man living imagine, that
the People, for whose sake all these
things are laid out, are under no
Obligations?

S. 3. I argue the Obligation of
Hearing the Word, from the
Nature of that Gospel-Revelation
upon which we preach.

The Divine Word is not a mere
piece of Speculation to entertain
the Curiosity, nor is it only a Re-
lation of Matters of Fact to amuse
the Minds of Men. 'Tis a System
of Divine Laws; 'tis a Declaration
of the Will of the Supreme
Ruler; it's a Practical Institution,
and contains the most weighty and
important things, that relate to our
daily Duty, and the eternal Wel-
fare of our Souls. And tho' the
great things of Religion are gene-
rally plain and most easy to be un-
derstood,

derstood, yet there are considerable Serm. II.
Difficulties sometimes attending 'em, u
and further Help is often necessary
to the generality of men, in order
to a right Apprehension and regu-
lar Scheme of Sacred Truth. Be-
sides the difficultys of Phrase and
Stile, proper to the Eastern Coun-
trys, and the frequent Allusions to
Rites and Customs among them,
which often need to be explain'd;
there are many things arising from
the Nature of the things themselves,
especially such as depend upon pure
Revelation, and were above the dis-
covery of natural Light. For in-
stance,

The great Subject of the Gospel-
Revelation, is the *Mystery of Re-
demption*, even the *Mystery* that hath
been hid from Ages and Generations,
but now is made manifest to the Saints,
to whom God would make known what
are the Riches of the Glory of this *Mys-
tery among the Gentiles*, which is Christ
in you the *Hope of Glory*, whom we
preach, warning every Man, and teach-
ing every man in all wisdom, that we may
present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.
There is an advanc'd Progress of
Knowledg in this, as well as a saving

Col. i. 26.
28.

Serm.II. Degree to be attain'd, *That we may*
present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.
Again, the Method of a Sinner's
Justification by Christ, as it is ner-
vously argu'd, and closely pursu'd,
thro various Topicks of Reason, a-
gainst many Errors and Mistakes,
needs to be distinctly represented
and open'd; and requires great Wis-
dom and Skill to render it easy and
familiar to weaker Minds: tho at
the same time nothing is more plain,
even to the meanest Capacity, than
the absolute Necessity of Depen-
dence on the Merits and Righteous-
of Jesus Christ, which is its general
Notion. Further, Hearing the
Word is profitable for all those
things for which the Scripture is
profitable, *for Doctrine, for Reproof,*
for Correction, for Instruction in Righ-
teousness; To instruct in Divine
Truth, to convince of Error, to re-
form our Lives, and to promote our
Holiness. There are many Dutys
of Religion that need to be repre-
sented distinctly to the Mind, and
to be urged upon the Consciences of
Men; there are many proper Consi-
derations scatter'd up and down in
Scripture, that need to be laid to-
gether,

*2 Tim. iii.
16.*

gether, and drawn out in full force, Serm.II.
to convince and persuade. We ~~are~~
find even the Apostles themselves,
in their preaching, gathering Testi-
mony and Confirmation to their
Subjects from Scriptures, that lie
very distant from one another, com-
paring *spiritual things with spiritual* ;
all which we cannot have the Bene-
fit of, without hearing the Word
preach'd. Most People have reason
to say, upon one account or other,
what the Eunuch said to *Philip*, when
he ran to him and heard him reading
the Prophet *Isaiah* ; and he ask'd him,
*Understandest thou what thou read-
est?* he answer'd, *How can I except some
man should guide me?* and he desired
Philip to come up and sit with him ; and
*Philip began at that Scripture, and
preached Christ unto him.* So do we
need the help of a stated Ministry,
who by meditating on these things,
and giving themselves to them, may
open the *Scriptures more clearly to us*,
and expound the way of God more per-
fectedly : Especially if you review here
what was said before, under those
two Heads, of the Darknes and
Weaknes of Mens Minds, and the
natural Aptitude and Fitness there-

Serm. II. is in the Qualifications of such a
w^ww Character, toward such Ends as
these.

S. 4. I argue the Obligation of
hearing the Word preach'd, from
the Promises of a Blessing upon the
due Attendance to it.

The Promise of Blessings to any
Practice, supposes and enforces the
Obligation of it. I am the more
engag'd; Interest and Gratitude
plead for Obedience to the Word
of Command that comes attended
with the Word of Promise, and
the Assurance of Reward. He has
promis'd to be with his Ministers
in the Exercise of their Office to
the end of the world, by his gracious
Presence and Spirit, assisting, incou-
raging, prospering, and succeeding
his Word and Ordinances in the faith-
ful Administration of them, and mak-
ing them the Power of God unto Salva-
tion. He hath said, Incline your Ear
and come unto me; Hear, and your Soul
shall live. He that looks into the perfect
Law of Liberty, and continues therein,
he not being a forgetful Hearer, but
a Doer of the Work, shall be blessed in
his Deed. A Blessing shall attend his
faithful and obedient Hearing of the
Word.

Word. The Promise of God is the Serm. II.
Support of our Faith, and an Ar-
gument of our Prayer: Remember
*thy Word unto thy Servant, on which
thou hast caused me to hope.* We say
so in pleading the Promise of his
Presence in our Assemblys, and se-
curely depend upon his promis'd
Blessing. And nothing can give
greater Encouragement and higher
Assurance to our Minds in any Du-
ty we perform. They that neglect
this Duty, deprive themselves of the
whole Benefit of one of the gracious
Promises of God. And not only so,
but in the next place,

S. 5. I argue from the Guilt charged
upon the neglect of this, and the
Threatnings against those who re-
fuse to hear the Word.

Promises and Threatnings are the
Sanctions of the Divine Commands,
and infer Duty and Obligation.
And that there are many Denunci-
ations of Wrath, and many Instan-
ces of the Execution of it too, re-
corded in Scripture, upon such as
refuse or neglect to hear the Word
of God, is undeniable. *Because I
have called and ye refused, I have
stretched out my hand and no man re-*

Serm. II. garded, but you have set at nought
 all my counsel, and would none of
 my reproof: I also will laugh at your
 calamity, I will mock when your fear
 cometh; when your fear cometh as de-
 solation, and your destruction as a

Prov. i. 24. whirlwind; when distress and anguish
 cometh upon you: then shall they call

ver. 33. upon me, but I will not answer; yea,
 they shall seek me early, but they shall
 not find me: for that they hated know-
 ledg, and did not chuse the fear of the
 Lord, they would none of my counsel;
 they despised all my reproof; therefore
 shall they be filled with their own de-
 vices, for the turning away of the sim-
 ple shall slay them; but whose hear-
 kenth unto me, shall dwell safely. He

Prov. xxviii. 9. that turneth away his ear from hear-
 ing the Law, even his Prayer shall be
 an abomination. The Apostles were
 directed to shake off the dust of their
 feet for a testimony against those Pla-
 ces that refused to receive the same
 Gospel we preach. And in the Pa-

Mat. xiii. rable of the Sower, all the Grounds
 are condemned that did not bring
 forth the Fruits of it. See that ye
 refuse not him that speaketh: for if
 they escaped not who refused him that
 spake (formerly) on earth, much more
 shall

shall not we, if we turn away from Serm. II.
 him that (still by his Word) speaketh 
 from Heaven. Nor are they only
 threaten'd who neglect the Word,
 but the Removal of the very Word
 is threaten'd as one of the severest
 Punishments of that Sin. When
 God says to *Ezekiel*, *I will make*
thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth ^{Ezek. iii.}
that thou shalt be dumb, and ^{26.}
shalt not be to them a reproof, for
they are a rebellious house; and to the
Church of Ephesus, I will remove thy ^{Rev. ii. 5.}
Candlestick out of its place, except
thou repent: Can I without Guilt
deprive my self of that, the Re-
moval of which, is represented as
one of the highest Denunciations of
the Anger of God, and Judgment
upon a People? A famine not of ^{Amos viii.}
bread nor of water, but of the Word of ^{12.}
the Lord, so as men shall run to and
fro to seek the Word of the Lord, and
shall not find it. It is represented
as a great Point gained by the Evil
One, when he can come and catch
the Word heard out of their minds. But
they save the Devil that trouble,
who will not so much as give it an
Hearing.

Serm. II. To conclude this Head : By the same Evidences, by which it appears, that the Neglect of Hearing, or Hearing amiss, was a great Sin ; it will appear that Hearing the Word must be a Duty : and we may as truly argue from the Threatnings of the Neglect, as from the Promises of a Blessing to the due Attendance.

§. 6. I argue the Obligation of Hearing the Word preach'd from the constant Practice of the Christian Church, and of good Men in all Ages.

Delight in the Word of God has always enter'd the Character of a good Man : With what Pleasure does David speak of his going into the Sanctuary, and diligently attending the Divine Law ? The rapturous Love, and lively Concern with which he expresses himself, at the Time of his constrained Absence from it ! or under remarkable Experience of Good by it ! The same is recommended by the Example of our Lord and of his Apostles. Our Lord at twelve years of Age did not disdain to hear the Doctors in their ordinary manner of Teaching in the Temple; Hearing them, and asking

ing them Questions. After our Lord's Serm. II. Ascension, the Disciples had two Meetings before the extraordinary Effusion of the Spirit; in the first of which, Peter preach'd to the Disciples, reasoning from Scripture and the Circumstance of things; a Sermon that introduc'd the Election of Matthias to be number'd with the Eleven Disciples. The first Christians met in solemn Assemblies to hear the Word preach'd, and attend upon the Ministry of the Apostles. Cornelius was directed by an Angel to send for Peter, *who when he cometh shall speak to thee things, which the Angel himself could have told him;* but that the World are to be directed to the instituted Ministry, and not to expect God's Favours in neglect of his Methods of bestowing them. When he was come, Cornelius says; *Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.* Paul's preaching the first day of the week, when the Disciples were met together to break Bread, from whence it should seem that Preaching was a part of their solemn Worship; and his Order to the Corinthians at their Meeting

Acts i.
Chap. ii.

A.C. x. 33.

33.

Serm. II. upon the first day of the week, and
his forbidding the forsaking of their
assembling themselves together as the
manner of some was, have been al-
ready mention'd. In the most pure
and primitive Times of the Christi-
an Church, we find that hearing the
Word preach'd was always a Part
of their solemn Worship, as appears
from the unquestionable Testimo-
nies of *Justin Martyr* and *Tertullian* ; who very fully relate to us
the Parts of publick Worship used
by the Christians of that time. *Ins-*
tin Martyr, the most antient next
to *Clement*, of the genuine Testi-
monies of the Primitive Church,
in relating the publick Orders ob-
serv'd by the Church in his Times,
says, Upon the Day call'd Sunday,
there is Meeting together of all the
Christians that live either in the Town
or Country; the Commentary of the A-
postles, and the Writings of the Pro-
phets are read, as the time will allow.
When the Reader has done, he that
presides, in a Speech delivers an In-
struction or Exhortation to the Imitation
of such good Examples. After this we all
stand up, and pour out our Prayers; and
as we have said, the Prayers being
ended,

ended, Bread and Wine and Water is Serm. II: brought forth; and the Pastor again, according to his Ability, sends up his Thanksgivings and Prayers, and the People in Acclamations say Amen. Then there is a Distribution and Communication made of what has been blessed, to every one present, and to the absent 'tis carry'd by the Deacons (a). The same Account Tertullian gives; We assemble together (says he) to pray, and we do it in numbers, that by mustring up an united Force, we carry our Point by a Holy Violence that is very pleasing to God. We meet to read the Scriptures, and we read them according to the Conditions of the Times we are in, and

(a) Iust. Mart. Apol. I. p. 131. Ed. Ox.
 Τῇ τοι ἡδίς λεγόμενη πάντοι πάντων χριστολογία
 ἡ ἀγρεα μηδόντων δῆτι τὸ αὐτὸ συρέλαθτις. Μητροὶ,
 καὶ τα ἀπεικημονεύματα τῷ ἀποστολῶν,
 οἱ τα συγερθμάτα τῷ περιφοτῶν αναγνώσκεται,
 μέχες εὐχαρεῖ. εἴ τα πανστάθεις αὐτοῦ
 μηδόντων, ο περεστούς διὰ λόγου τῶν νεοδο-
 στιν καὶ περίπλοντι τοιχοῦ καλῶν τέστων μηρί-
 στος ποιεῖται. ἔπιτρα αὐτούτα μετακοινή παντας
 καὶ ἐνχαριτόπειρις καὶ, οις περιφοραῖς, παν-
 ειδόντων πήμαν το εὐχαριστοῦ περιφέρεται,
 τοι δινοῦ, καὶ οι περεστούς εὐχαρι-
 στοίως καὶ εὐχαρισταῖς βοη θύναμις αὐτῷ, απε-
 τίπτει, καὶ ο λαός ἐπειδηματεῖ, λέγων Αριū.

Serm. II. as the Occasion requires either for Admonition or Confirmation. In short, we nourish our Faith, we erect our Hope, we fix our Confidence, by these sacred Words, which we further improve by the frequent Inculcations of Precepts. There are Exhortations, Corrections, and Divine Discipline (b). And in another Place, (c) describing the Practice of their Assemblys, he says, the Scriptures are read, Psalms are sung, and the Sermons are made. Cyprian (d) mentions it as one Misery of the Persecution, that they could not behold the Brethren gathered together, nor hear their Bishops Preaching. In the Constitutions call'd Apostolical, the whole 57 Chap. of the 2d Book

(b) Tertull. Apol. ch. 39. Coimus in Coetum & Congregationem, ut ad Deum quasi manu facta precationibus ambiemus orantes. Hac Vis Deo grata est. — Coimus ad litterarum Divinarum Commemorationem, si quid praesentium Temporum qualitas aut præmonere cogitat recognoscere. Certe hædem sanctis vocibus pacemus, spem erigimus, fiduciam figimus, Disciplinam Preceptorum nihilominus inculcationibus densamus. ibidem etiam Exhortationes, Castigationes & Censura divina.

(c) De Anima, C. 9. Scriptura leguntur, Psalmi cantantur. Allocutiones proferuntur.

(d) Cyprian. Ep. 56. Nec quisquam Fratres dilectissimi, cum Populum nostrum fugari conspexerit aucti Persecutionis & spargi concurberit, quod collectam Fraternitatem non videat, nec tractantes Episcopos audiat.

is spent in laying out the distinct Serm.II.
Parts of the Ministers and People
in the Worship of God ; where, af-
ter the reading the Scriptures, it is
said, In the next place, let the Pres-
byters one by one exhort the Peo-
ple (e). Had these Primitive Wri-
ters set themselves to have describ'd
the Worship of God in our Assem-
blys, they could not have done it
in more agreeable Expressions, to
the Honour of our Assemblys be it
said ; it is the very Model we ob-
serve, and contains all that we own
to be the essential Parts of Worship
instituted by Christ.

To Conclude :

This has been the Practice of the
most Eminent and Experienc'd Chris-
tians, for Holiness and Knowledg,
who have always been the most dili-
gent Attenders on the Preaching of
the Word, as they have found the
saving Efficacy and most refreshing
Influence from it. In short, every
Age of the Christian Church, in
its greatest Darknes and Degene-

(e) *Const. Apost. Lib. 2. Ch. 57.*

Serm. II. racy, every Sect and Persuasion of Christians, of any account in the Christian World, how different soever in other Opinions and Modes of Worship, have all agreed in this, that Hearing the Word Preach'd, (i.e.) Explain'd and Apply'd, was a Part of the Worship instituted by Christ, and have practis'd accordingly.

THE

THE EXCELLENCE

O F

Hearing the Word.

Broadbury, Thos.

SERMON III.

ISAIAH LII, 7.

How beautiful upon the Mountains
are the Feet of him that brings
good Tidings, that publisheth
Peace, that bringeth good Ti-
dings of Good, that publisheth
Salvation, and saith unto Zion,
Thy God reigneth !

THE Common Subject we are
now upon, is Hearing the
Word; the Nature of the Du-
ty has been open'd, the Arguments
to prove it drawn out and pleaded:
That

Sermon III That which falls to my Share, by
 the Distribution we have made, is
 to tell you the Excellence of the
 Work it self.

How suitable the Text is to the Occasion upon which I employ it, will appear from every Sentence. The Persons whose Feet are so beautiful upon the Mountains, are the Messengers of the Gospel, these bring good Tidings; the best News that ever came to the World, that God is in Christ Jesus reconciling them to himself. The Angel who proclaim'd both the Way of the Messiah, and the Nature of his Errand, told the Shepherds, it was glad Tidings of great Joy, which should be to all People: and it may be laid further of these, that they publish Peace. This was so much the Design of Christ in coming down, that we find it among his Names, *this Man shall be our Peace.* The Message is so kind and gracious, that we are told over again, they bring good Tidings of Good. The thing it self they tell us is Happiness, and the report they give of it is upon the fullest assurance; because, as it is here added, *they publish Salvation:* A Pardon that begins with Holiness, and

2 Cor. v. 19.

Luke ii. 10.

Mic. iv. 5.

and grows up into Glory ; all that we can need in one World, all that we can have in another : and to secure the whole Felicity, they say unto Zion, *Thy God reigns.* The Church, in the *New Testament*, takes a Title from that Mountain which was holy in the *Old*. We are now come to Mount Zion, the City of the living God : And 'tis by the Gospel that we know our God reigns, that he is manifested in the flesh, and that he is King, his Authority's unmingled ; he hath a Power both to rule and to save us. *He sits as a Priest upon his Throne :* he hath made the Empire and the Benefits of his Grace to be of the same Extent, for he is the Author of eternal Salvation to as many as obey him.

Serm. III

Heb. xii. 24.

Zech. vi.
13.

Heb. v. 9.

Besides the Phrase of these words which carries 'em down to the Gospel, all the Context that lies around 'em will determine us into this Meaning : the Verses that go before, speak of their coming out of Babylon as an Introduction to these happy times ; and those that follow, describe one whom God calls his Servant, who would deal prudently, and be extol'd and exalted, and be very high : that,

ver. 13,

14, 15.

Serm. III as many were astonished at him, his Vi.
 sage was so marr'd more than any Man's,
 and his Form more than the Sons of
 Men, so he shou'd sprinkle many Na-
 tions. And then, the Characters are
 so plain in the 53d Chap. of his
 dying for Sin, and the Kingdom
 he would found upon that Merit,
 that it's too late to ask the Ques-
 tion the Eunuch did, *Of whom I pray
 thee does the Prophet speak this, of
 himself or of some other Man?* But to
 make any farther dispute impossible,
 the very words I'm upon are what
 the great Apostle leaves in the Cause
 for which I have now chosen them:

Rom. x. 12,
 ---15.

*The same Lord, that is over all, is rich
 unto all that call upon him: how then
 shall they call on him of whom they have
 not heard? And how shall they hear
 without a Preacher? And how shall he
 preach except he be sent? As it is written,
 How beautiful are the Feet of them that
 preach the Gospel of Peace, and bring
 glad Tidings of good Things!*

As the Text gives us the Nature
 of their Message with a sweet Va-
 riety of Turns, so we are told how
 they will be receiv'd by those that
 know and love the Truth; such as are
 here call'd the Children of Zion, a
 Peo-

People subjected to them as their Serm. III
 King, whom these Persons serve as ~~~~~
 their Master: Their Feet are beau-
 tiful, which shews that the Credit
 is all relative, there's no glorying in ^{1 Cor. iii. 5,}
 Men; they are but Ministers by whom
^{21.} ye believe: but they are here con-
 sider'd as the *Bringers of good Tidings*.
 Not blustering with a few Notions
 that are plainly to advance them-
 selves: not being *Lords over God's* ^{1 Pet. v. 3.}
Heritage, but *saying unto Zion thy*
God reigns. These Mountains where
 the good News of a Saviour would
 be so welcome, may be those of Zi-
 on and Moriah; the one had been
 the dwelling Place of the Ark, and
 the other was the Foundation of the
 Temple: Or it may refer to the
 Hill-Country of Judea, where John ^{Luke i. 68.}
 the Baptist was born, and Jesus was
 brought up, and did many of his
 Mighty Works: Or you may un-
 derstand it of the tedious Journys
 upon which Christ would send his
 Apostles, when he arose to contend
 before the Mountains, and caused the ^{Mic. vi. 1.}
 Hills to hear his Voice. Or perhaps
 it signifies the Publick Way he wou'd
 put the Gospel into: He ever spake ^{John xviii. 20.}
 openly where the Jews always resorted;
 in

Serm. III in secret he spake nothing : Paul appeals to this as the Reputation of his Doctrine ; that these things were not done in a Corner. Or it may tell us the Glory that would redound to a Messiah, that the mountain of the Lord's House should be established up on the tops of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, and all the people flow unto it. And so that Promise will be fulfill'd to him, I will cause thee to tread upon the high Places of the Earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy Father.

Indeed, it's only said in the singular Number, that the Feet of him are beautiful who brings glad Tidings, as if there was but one in the Service, and but one in the Honour: If you will limit the Sense of the Expression, and carry it no further than a single Person, there's no dispute but that it all belongs to Christ: *He began to speak to the World this great Salvation : many of his hearers bare him witness, and wondred at the gracious Words that proceeded out of his mouth.* But if you'll refer it to those whom he employs, the manner of the Phrase tells us it belongs to 'em all, whilst they fulfil the Ministry they have receiv'd,

Heb. ii. 3.

Luke iv.
22.

criv'd, and testify the Gospel of the Grace Serm. III
 of God. And the Honour is not upon ^{thee}
 their own score, but his who hath ^{Act. xx. 24.}
 counted them faithful, putting them in- ^{1 Tim. i. 12.}
 to the Ministry : for as they preach not ^{2 Cor. iv. 6.}
 themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord,
 and themselves only your Servants for
 Jesus's sake ; so what they do goes
 under his Name : He came and preach- ^{Eph. ii. 17.}
 ed Peace to them that were afar off, and
 to them that were nigh. Upon which ^{1 Thes. iv.}
 account 'tis said, he that despiseth, de- ^{8.}
 spiseth not Man but God. And it was a
 long while after he had offer'd himself
 thro' the eternal Spirit, that the Apostle
 distinguish'd him from Moses in these
 Terms : See that you refuse not him ^{Heb. xii. 25.}
 that speaketh ; for if they escaped not
 that refused him that spake on Earth,
 much more shall not we escape if we turn
 away from him that speaketh from
 Heaven.

Now the Question that ariseth
 from this Account, is, what there
 can be in the glad Tidings of Sal-
 vation, that will make the Feet of
 those that bring them beautiful up-
 on the Mountains. How is it so ex-
 cellent a Thing to attend on the
 Ministry of Reconciliation ? In an-
 swer to this, I shall lead you into
 several

Serm. III several Particulars that will shew,
what an Honour God hath put upon
this Ordinance. That he hath appointed the Method it self, and
commanded your Regard to it, you have heard among the Arguments;
but besides the mere Authority that makes it a Duty, he hath dignify'd
it several Ways.

I. The Preaching and Hearing
the Gospel is a publick Testimony
to the Glory of God.

II. 'Tis contriv'd with the utmost
regard both to the Advantage and
Honour of human Nature. There
is something in it worthy of the
Reason that God hath given us.

III. He hath more own'd this with
his Blessing than any other Methods;
either the Light of Nature, or Mi-
racles, or Afflictions, or the Dis-
pensations he gave 'em in the Time
of the Old Testament.

IV. By this he hath convey'd the
greatest Favours that we can have.

V. It hath been number'd among
the chief of our national Mercies,
'tis for a common Good.

VI. We may argue some Reputa-
tion for it, from the Zeal that Satan
hath always express'd against it.

VII. 'Tis

VII. 'Tis what will have a Glory Serm.III
put upon it in another World. ~~~~~
From all this we may collect the
EXCELLENCE of the Word of
Faith, which we preach, and you
believe.

I. The Value of this Dispensa-
tion appears from the publick Tes-
timony it gives to the Glory of Christ.
We shall never see the King so much
in his Beauty as we do in the Ever-
lasting Gospel, till we come to the ^{Isa. xxxiii.} _{17.}
Land that is very far off. This will
be evident from three things: The
Gospel and the Ministry of it are
the Purchase of his Blood: They
are the greatest Instance we have of
his Glory in Heaven: And, The
best means of promoting his Em-
pire upon Earth.

§. I. If we are to take our Estimate
of a thing by what it *cost*, 'tis at
the dearest Rate that we come to
have the Ministry of the Word a-
mong us. These two Articles are
put together, that he abolish'd Death, ^{2 Tim.i. 10.}
and brought Life and Immortality to
light by the Gospel: And how did he
do the former, but by Death subdu-
ing him that had the Power of Death?
_{Heb. ii. 14.}

He

Serm. III He redeem'd us from the Curse of the
 Law, being made a Curse for us.
 Gal. iii. 13. And his opening the Convictions of
 Life and Immortality by the Gospel,
 is plac'd upon the same foot with
 his Atonement. 'Tis true, the
 Gifts that he receiv'd for Men are
 brought in upon the Head of his
 ascending on High. Before he did
 this, he is suppos'd to be out of his
 Pain and Trouble; but that which
 gave him a claim to it was the Me-
 rit of his Cross, as the Apostle
 tells us in a long Digression: Non

Psal. lxviii.
18.

Eph. iv. 9, 10 that he ascended, what is it but that he
 first descended into the lower Parts of
 the Earth? He that descended is the
 same that ascended up far above all
 Heavens, that he might fill all things.

There was a strong Type of this
 Heb. ix. 19, under the Law; for when Moses had
 20, 27. spoken every Precept to all the People, he
 took the Blood of Calves and Goats, and
 sprinkled both the Book and the People,
 saying, This is the Blood of the Testa-
 ment which God hath enjoin'd you, q.d.
 You could have known your Duty
 upon no other terms than those of
 a Reconciliation between God and
 you: Moreover, he sprinkled likewise
 with Blood both the Tabernacles, from
 whence

whence God reveal'd himself, and Serm. III
all the Vessels of the Ministry, which
pertain'd to the most holy Service. There were to be no Discoveries either of Obedience or Mercy, but upon this Ground, that a Ransom was provided: and if the Blood of a Goat must give value even to the Book of the Law, if there was no knowing the one without shedding the other, we see to what the Church, under the New Testament, oweth all the Light that it hath: for it was necessary that the Patterns Ver. 23, 24.
of things in the Heavens should be pu-^{25.} rify'd with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better Sacrifices than these, for Christ is not enter'd into the holy Places made with Hands, which are the Figures of the true, but into Heaven it self, there to appear in the Presence of God for us; nor yet that he should offer himself often. This supposeth that he must have done it once, or otherwise the heavenly things that are made known unto us would have been unpurify'd.

As all the Branches of his last Prayer were in view of those Sorrows that came upon him, so they are argu'd by them. He begs for

G every

Serm. III every thing, because he had glorify'd
God on Earth, and finish'd the Work
 Joh. xvii. 4
 Ver. 20.

that was given him to do : and there,
 among the rest, he claims a Blessing
 on the Ministry ; *Neither pray I for*
these alone, but for them also that shall
believe on me thro their Word. And
 hence we read not only of particu-
 lar Souls, but of a *Church* that he
 hath purchas'd with his own Blood :

Acts xx. 28.

Eph. v. 26.

1 Pet. i. 19.

Job xxviii.
18, 19.

Zal. i. 13.

he had this in view upon the Cross,
 both to procure the Blessings them-
 selves of Pardon and Holiness, and
 the Means by which the one is dis-
 cover'd, and the other convey'd :
He lov'd the Church, and gave himself
for it, that he might sanctify and
cleanse it with the washing of Water by
the Word. Remember then, the Gos-
 pel was bought with a Price, as well
 as the People who believe it. 'Tis
 procur'd, as you are redeem'd, not
 with such corruptible Things as Sil-
 ver and Gold (for the Price of this
 Wisdom is above Rubies, the Topaz
 of Ethiopia cannot equal it :) but with
 the precious Blood of the Son of God,
 as of a Lamb without Blemish, and
 without Spot. Consider this when
 you are ready to say, *What a Wear-
 i ness is it? when Satan would put*
you

you upon *making Light of it.* A little matter hinders you from receiving the Truth; but the Wrath of Heaven, the Fury of Hell, the Curse of the Law, the Pains of the Cross, could not hinder Christ from giving it.

Serm. III

Mat. xxii. 5.

§. 2. Preaching and Hearing the Word are the most publick Argument we have how glorious our Redeemer is *in Heaven.* There were two things that he made the Heads of his Reputation; That he was sent down by the Father, and That he should be accepted upon his Return. The first of these is what he sustain'd, upon the Evidence of Miracles, that *no other Man did:* And these made their way, as Nicodemus owns; *We know that thou art a Teacher come from God, for none can do the things that thou dost except God be with him.* But the second, which is the greater Article of Fame, must have a sufficient Proof: They might see that God had sent him into the World; but how shall they be satisfy'd that he took him out of it? and that when he was put to Death in the Flesh, he was *justify'd in the Spirit?* Indeed we are told, that

Joh. iii. 2.

^{Jer. III.} God rais'd him from the Dead, and
^{1 Pet. i. 21.} gave him Glory: The Apostles con-
^{1 Cor. xv. 6.} vers'd with him forty Days; he was
^{Acts i.} seen of above five hundred Brethren
 at once. But the farthest they could
 go, is to say, he was taken from
 them, and the Angels open'd out
 the manner of his Ascension; as they
 were gazing after him, the Cloud re-
 ceiv'd him out of their Sight: But
 what became of him then, no Eye
 could tell. Now the rest of the Sto-
 ry we must have another way; that

^{Eph. i. 20,} God set him at his right Hand, far a-
^{21, 22.} bove Principalities, and Powers, and
 Might, and Dominion, and every
 Name that is nam'd, not only in this
 World, but also in that which is to
 come, and hath put all things under
 his Feet. But how does this appear?

We have no Messenger from that
 Kingdom to tell us the manner of
 his Entry: The Apostles Evidence
 reacheth no farther than his leading
^{Luke xxiv.} them out to Bethany, and lifting up
^{10, 51.} his Hands to bless them; and that
 whilst he bless'd them, he was parted
 from them. What Magnificence he
 appear'd with on the other side of
 the Cloud, how he took his Place,
 and receiv'd his Welcome, were
 things

things beyond any Observation they Serm. III
could make; but yet God hath not ~~witnes~~
left himself without a Witness to this,
which is an Article so important
to our Faith and his Glory: for he
hath made him to be the Head over all
things to the Church, which is his Bo-
dy, the Fulness of him that fills all in
all. The Capacity that he hath of
answering so many Dependants be-
low, lets us see that he is the greatest
above, because that is more than
Angels could do. And how does he
fill all things, but by a Blessing upon
his Word? that is the Instance he
gives them of it; You hath he quic-
Eph. ii. 1.
ken'd who were dead in Trespasses and
Sins. And the means of breathing
into them such a Life as proves the
Glory he hath in Heaven, is the
Ministry of the Word; 'tis upon
hearing the Voice of the Son of Man, Joh. v. 25.
that they who are dead shall live.

The Connexion that our Work
hath to his Authority, is a thing of
his own making, as he told his Dis-
ciples the last time he had to be
with them: He opens his Commis-
sion, All Power is given to me both in
Heaven and Earth: and now when
they are establish'd as the Officers

Mat. xxvii
18, 19.

Serm. III of this universal Glory, what are
 ~~~~~ they to do, but to go and disciple all  
*Nations*, and preach the Gospel to e-  
 very Creature? The Apostle Peter  
 had never been in Heaven, and  
 therefore could not speak of his Sa-  
 viour's Glory there, as he might  
 do in the Mount of Transfiguration,  
 where he was an Eye-witness: but  
 yet he could argue it from the Suc-  
 cess that follow'd the Ministry of  
 the Word; *He being exalted by the*  
*right Hand of God, and having re-*  
*ceiv'd the Promise of the Father, hath*  
*shed forth that which ye now see and*  
*hear.* And therefore when Men  
 forbid us to preach, 'tis not only  
 robbing the Churches, but a sort of  
 stealing the Crown; divesting Christ  
 in this World of the greatest Evi-  
 dence he hath given us of what he  
 is in another. He was to have a  
*Seed to serve him, and such as are*  
*accounted to the Lord for a Genera-*  
*tion:* This is a Branch of his Re-  
 ward. And how are they brought  
 to this Service, how are they em-  
 ploy'd in it? by declaring his Right-  
 eousness to a People that shall be born,  
 that the Lord hath done this. 'Tis up-  
 on this account that the Apostle  
 writes

Psal. xxii.  
30, 31.

writes in these high Terms about Serm. III<sup>rd</sup>  
*Titus, who was his Partner and Fel-*  
*low-helper, and the Brethren that were*  
*employ'd with him in the Ministry,*  
*he calls them, the Glory of Christ.* 2Cor.viii.2;  
*And hence you find they that first*  
*preach'd the Gospel did not only*  
*proclaim it as a Method of Peace*  
*to the World, but as an Argument*  
*of a Redeemer's Greatness, they*  
*call'd themselves the Witnesses of his* Acts i. 22.  
*Resurrection.* And the Spirit who  
*attended their Ministry gave in a*  
*particular Evidence of this, that*  
*God exalted him to be a Prince and* Act.v.31; 32  
*a Saviour, to give Repentance to Israel,*  
*and Remission of their Sins: And how*  
*was that, but by having Repentance* Luke xxiv.  
*and Remission preach'd among all Na-* 47.  
*tions in his Name? of which, say*  
*they, we are Witnesses, and so is the*  
*Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to*  
*them that obey him.* Look then up-  
*on the Gospel you hear, not only*  
*as the Purchase of a Cross, but the*  
*Grant of a Throne.* 'Tis an Argu-  
*ment what your Saviour hath de-  
 serv'd, and how much he can give:  
 His Orders are issu'd out from the  
 excellent Glory; for when he had as-  
 cended up on High, and led Captivity* Psal. lxviii.  
 18.

Serm. III captive, then did he receive Gifts for  
 Men, that the Lord God might dwell among them: For this reason does the Apostle use Words, whose Meaning reacheth so far, according

<sup>2 Tim. i. 11.</sup> to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God that was committed to my Trust.

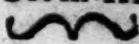
'Tis a Gospel that hath the Glory of the World that it came from, 'tis of his ordering who is over all, God blessed for evermore.

§. 3. Preaching and Hearing the Word are the best means of promoting the Empire Christ hath upon Earth, nor hath any other Dispensation answer'd this End in such a degree. The Miracles that he wrought shew'd his Power, and the Doctrine that he taught his Wisdom; but the great Mysteries of Godliness are to be publish'd another way. Thus do the Gentiles come to know the unsearchable Riches

<sup>Eph. iii. 8, 9.</sup> of Christ; 'tis by preaching that we make all Men see what is the Fellowship of the Mystery from the Beginning

of the World, which hath been hid in God. Nay, this is so good a way of learning, that he supposeth the Intelligence will be carry'd upwards; To the Principalities and Powers in heavenly

venly Places, is made known by the Serm. III  
Church the manifold Wisdom of God.



So that refusing to hear is not only a Disobedience to his Will, a Neglect of his Goodness, but a Rebellion against the Empire that he hath set up among Men ; and it seems to be upon this score, that the Apostle gives us such a Gradation of the Jewish Guilt : *Killing the Lord Jesus and their own Prophets,* were Sins more within Compass ; but forbidding them to preach unto the Gentiles, that they might be sav'd,<sup>1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.</sup> fill'd up the Measure of their Iniquity, and brought Wrath upon them to the uttermost. What ! Is there any comparison between stopping a Minister's Mouth, and shedding a Saviour's Blood ? If Crimes are consider'd by the value of the Persons they are directed against, the Inequality lies all on the other side : but that which makes the latter the worse in this case, is, that murdering of Christ was an Offence committed in the State of his Humiliation, when he came in the Form of a Servant, and threw himself into the way of such Usage ; but hindring the Gospel is a Blow at his Glory.

Serm. III It may be said then of those that  
separate themselves, that they are  
*without Christ*; they neglect that  
which is both an Expression of their  
own Allegiance, and an inducement  
to others.

II. Another Head of Argument  
to show you the Excellence of Hear-  
ing, is taken from our *Selves*, That  
no Dispensation does so well secure  
both the Interest and Honour of  
human Nature. By that God deals  
with you as Creatures possess'd of  
Reason: Had he left you to Miracles,  
these might have confounded the Senses, and carry'd the Surprise  
so far as to disable the better Fa-  
culties from doing their Office.  
Should the Project of *the rich Man*  
*in Hell* have obtain'd to have one  
Luk.xvi.30. sent from the Dead, it would rather  
terrify than inform. We should be  
ready to suspect the Vision it self;  
and wherever the Messenger came  
from, he could not have us'd stron-  
ger Arguments or easier Words  
than we have already: and the Glo-  
ry or Flame that he might mingle  
in his manner of Pleading, would  
bear too hard upon the Understand-  
ing,

ing, and only put the Affections in-  
to a hurry : If this Apparition  
continu'd with us, it would lose its  
Awe ; if it did not, we should lose  
the Impression. So that this was  
an Imagination extorted by mere  
Darkness and Pain : but *Abraham*  
knew both the Frame of human  
Nature, and the Propriety of Ar-  
gument so much better, as to tell  
him, *if they believ'd not Moses and the Prophets,* neither would they believe,  
*Ver. 31.*  
*the one came from the Dead.*

But now God, in preaching the  
Gospel, deals with you according to  
what he *knows* to be *your* Frame.  
You are made for such a Dispensa-  
tion ; there are three things may be  
observ'd of it : The plainest Rule  
given for your Faith : No Autho-  
rity, either in Heaven or Earth, can  
impose any thing new upon you :  
You are to take nothing upon Trust.

§. I. The Excellency of the Gof-  
pel, as it is put into the way of  
Preaching, appears from the *Rules*  
he hath given us : These were the  
last Words of our Lord, *Teach them* Mat. xxviii  
*to observe all things that I command* <sup>20.</sup>  
you. The Bible goes the whole Com-  
pass of Faith and Practice. There  
can

Serm. III can be no Obligation upon you either to believe or do what you are not able to find there. Indeed if you were to admit for *Doctrines* the *Commandments of Men*, or worship God according to their Precepts, you would never know where to end.

<sup>1 Pet. i. 19.</sup> But we have a surer Word of Prophecy, to which you do well to take heed, as to a Light that shines in a dark Place. Nor can we imagine in a matter that concerns the Glory of Christ so much as this does, that he would leave his People loose and undirected: No, he hath given them sound Speech that cannot be condemn'd, and what he calls in another Place, <sup>1 Tim. vi. 3.</sup> wholesom Words; the thing lies all <sup>1 Joh. ii. 27.</sup> before you, and you need not that any Man should teach you, but as the same Anointing teacheth all things, and is Truth and no Lye.

You are not left to the Uncertainties they had in the time of the <sup>Jer. xxxi. 34.</sup> Prophets, where they taught every Man his Neighbour, and every Man his Brother, saying, What hath the Lord spoken? But now they all know him from the least to the greatest; and if they are all taught of God, well may it be said, Great is the Peace of

of the Children. Tho sometimes Serm. III  
the matter of Faith, the thing you  
are to believe, can't be comprehen-  
ded by Reason, yet the Testimony  
upon which you assent to it is di-  
vine and easy: and as to the busi-  
ness of Duty, the Descriptions are  
plain, the Arguments impressing,  
the whole Rule, both of Doctrine  
and Practice, is put into your  
Hands; *as for God, his Word is per-  
fect.*

§. 2. No *Additions* shall be made  
to this. As they who writ the  
Scripture did not receive it of *Man*, Gal. i. 12.  
*neither came it by Man, but by the*  
*Revelation of Christ:* So they are as  
much comprehended within the  
Rule as others. And if the Apo-  
stle himself should pretend after-  
wards to a *Dominion over our Faith*,  
he would have deserv'd an Excom-  
munication. Nay, an Incroach-  
ment is not to be allow'd, tho the  
Person that made it came down  
from the Throne of God. Tho  
we or an *Angel from Heaven preach* Gal. i. 8, 9.  
*any other Gospel to you than that we*  
*have preach'd unto you, let him be ac-*  
*curs'd. As we said before, so say I*  
*now again, If any Man preach any*  
*other*

Serm. III other Gospel unto you, than that we  
 have receiv'd, let him be accurs'd.

What an honourable Institution are you then under? That which is bounded, not only as to all the Learning and Discoveries of this World, but is never to be strain'd, tho the whole General Assembly and Church of the First-born should pass a Vote. What a glorious Rule is that we lay before you, which neither an Apostle nor an Angel can break in upon without a Curse?

So that here is no imposing upon you. Our Ministry is not an Artifice to make you believe what we

1 Thess. ii. 3, please. 4. Our Exhortation is not of Uncleanliness, nor of Deceit, nor of Guile;

but as we are allow'd of God, to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing Man, but God that searches the Hearts.

If you are trick'd by those that pretend to teach you, 'tis because they are Knaves and you are Fools; 'tis owing to an Ignorance of the Scriptures, or some Stupidity in your

Jer. iii. 5. selves: For the Prophets could never prophesy falsely, or the Priests bear rule by their means, if the People did not love to have it so. For,

§. 3. You're to take nothing up- Serm. III  
on Trust. What some call an im- ~~~~~  
plicit Faith, is a Baseness that every  
good Man would be ashame'd of.

This made the Bereans more noble, <sup>Act. xvii.</sup>  
~~whiseys,~~ better born than they of Thef- <sub>II.</sub>

salonica, because they searched the  
Scripture daily, and brought even  
the Sermons of the Apostles them-  
selves to the Test, to see whether  
the things were so or no. Your on-  
ly external Rule is the Scripture ;  
the Faculty that judges of this, is  
a Man's own Conscience ; the Means  
of making the Application happy  
to you, are several ; Reading, Hear-  
ing, Conversation, comparing spiri-  
tual things with spiritual ; but above  
all, an humble Prayer to him, who  
can lead us into all Truth : and it is  
no great matter, if, after such a di-  
lignant following on to know the Lord,  
you shou'd believe and practise in  
the face of Synods, Councils, Con-  
vocations, or any other human Mix-  
tures of People. Nay, tho' an An-  
gel himself should say, you are in  
the wrong, if he does not convincee  
you by an Argument, his Word  
ought not to be of so much weight  
with you, as your own Scruples :

For

Serm. III For the Apostle puts the Case still  
 higher than this, I know and am  
 persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there  
 is nothing unclean of it self; but yet  
 he adds, nevertheless to him that es-  
 teems any thing to be unclean, to him  
 it is unclean.

Rom. xiv.  
14.

The Pretences that others have  
 of being more learned than you,  
 signify nothing. Christ himself had  
 the Tongue of the Learned, not to bear  
 down the Weary, but to give him  
 a Word in Season. Their plying you  
 with Antiquity, Fathers and Monu-  
 ments, leaves you as much in the  
 Dark as ever. 'Tis but a Vanity  
 toſſ'd to and fro of them that seek  
 Death. We find it has only swell'd  
 up a Church-Tyranny to the height  
 in which we now have it. And un-  
 less there's a more than common  
 Temper to carry a Person thro that  
 Study, their dwelling so long among  
 the Tombs, will have the same ef-  
 fect it had upon him, who was so  
 fierce that no Man might pass that  
 Way. Certainly, if you are to de-  
 termine whether an Angel preaches  
 another Gospel or no, and to curse  
 him if he does, you may use the  
 same Freedom with a Father. The

Matt. viii.  
28.

Apostle

Apostle writ to wise Men, and bid them judge what he said. Serm. III

<sup>1</sup> Cor. x. 25.

And, what a noble Dispensation is this, when the last Appeal is made to the Scripture and your own Consciences ? What you hear, you may bring to the Law and to the Testimony ; and if they speak not according to this Word, 'tis because there is no Light in them. Isa. viii. 20.

III. The Excellence of this Duty will appear, by comparing it with the other Methods that God has us'd to open our Ears unto Discipline. As he spake at sundry Times, so he did it in divers Manners. Heb. i. 1.

We read upon several Occasions of his appearing to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob : And afterwards, that he talk'd to Moses as a Man does to his Friend ; the Similitude of the Lord did he behold. But whatever way he took to make himself visible, yet that Dispensation sunk upon their coming into Canaan : for Manoah and his Wife spake of it as a thing both strange and fatal ; We shall surely die, because we have seen God. Exo. xxxiii. 11. Judg. xiii. 22.

Sometimes he speaks in a Dream, in a Vision of the Night, when deep Sleep falls Job xxxiii. 15, 16.

Serm. III falls upon Men, and Slumberings upon  
 the Beds ; then he opens the Ears of  
 Men, and seals their Instruction.

Besides this, he has rais'd up  
 Prophets : *The Word of the Lord  
 was with them, and his Hand upon  
 them.* Those Holy Men spoke or  
2 Pet. i. ult. writ, as they were mov'd by the Holy  
 Ghost. This was the Conduct that  
 he first took his People under, when  
 they grew into a Nation ; *By a Prophet  
 the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt,*  
Hos. xii. 13. and by a Prophet was he preserved.

In the Wilderness he communed  
Exod. xxv. 22. with them from above the Mercy-Seat,  
 and afterwards his Urim and Thum-  
Deu. xxxiii. 8. mim were with his Holy One.

Sometimes he gave 'em Miracles.  
Psal. lxxxi. 1. At the Waters of Meribah he made  
 a Statute to prove them, whether they  
 wou'd walk in his Laws or no. He an-  
 swer'd them then in the secret Place  
 of Thunder.

He taught them by the Ceremo-  
 nial Law, which was putting them  
Gal. iii. 24. iv. 2. under Tutors and Gouvernours, till the  
 time appointed ; for the Law is our  
 School-master to bring us to Christ.

Over and above what I have men-  
 tion'd, which seems peculiar to the  
 Jews, there is the Light of Nature,

Spirit of Man, which is the Candle Serm. III  
of the Lord; by which, what may be known of God is manifest unto us.

Prov. xxx.

27.

Rom. i. 19.

To this he adds the Discipline of his Hand, he lodges a Voice in our Afflictions, that we may hear the Rod, and him that has appointed it. Mic. vi. 9.  
These are part of his Ways: But the Word he has given us to search and hear, is above them all. You are better taught in this Method than any of those that I have here mention'd; as it is more publick and continued, more full and plain, what all the rest lead to.

S. i. 'Tis a more publick and abiding Dispensation. It reaches further, and it stays longer. There are more People in it, and they have a great deal more of it.

God's appearing in a Vision or Dream was the Privilege but of one Man, and perhaps he had it not much oftner than one time; we never read of 'em but on particular Occasions. But now he opens his Mouth to High and Low, Rich and Poor together. Wisdom stands in the Top of the high Places, she cries at the Gates, at the Entry of the City, at the coming in of the Doors.

You

Serm. III You may be a long while waiting  
 for a Miracle, and perhaps never have it : But here's an Instruction nearer hand. Say not in thine Heart,

Rom. x. 6. Who shall ascend into Heaven, and who shall descend into the Depth ? The Word is nigh thee, even in thy Mouth, and in thine Heart ; and this is the Word that we preach. For People then to look any where else, is to leave their Hope, as well as Piety, in a desperate Way. What a sad Case

<sup>1 Sam xxviii</sup> must Saul be in, when God answer'd him no more by Dream, nor by Urim, nor by Prophets ? And how dreadful was his Project of supplying this Loss, when instead of consulting Samuel's Writings, he calls up his Spectre ? But thus bewilder'd are they, who take their Measures from any thing besides the Word of God. How much better was it with David,

Psal. cxix. who could say, Thy Commandments are ever with me ?

And besides, many of these Dispensations are past : Prophecies cease,

<sup>1</sup> Cor. xiii. Tongues vanish, and the Law having but a Shadow of good Things to come.

Heb. x. 1. was not suffer'd to continue by reason of the Weakness and Unprofitableness thereof. He remov'd these as Things

that

that are shaken, that what cannot be Serm. III  
 shaken may remain: And our having <sup>the</sup>  
 a Kingdom that cannot be moved, is <sup>Heb. xiii.</sup>  
<sub>25, 28.</sub> given as an Argument that we shou'd  
 bear him that speaketh from Heaven.

§. 2. This is more full and plain,  
 the rest were either dark or imper-  
 fect. Human Reason lets us see what  
 a poor Guide it is in those Parts of  
 the World where they have no better.

They worship they know not what, fal- Joh. iv. 22.  
 ling down to the Stock of a Tree. They Isa. xliiv. 19.  
 inherit Vanity, Lyes, and things where-  
 in there can be no Profit. And will a Jer. xvi. 19,  
<sub>20.</sub> Man make Gods to himself, which yet  
 are no Gods? Tho they have some  
 rude Sketches of Morality, yet the  
 Way of Peace have they not known.  
 Not only their Mind, but their very  
 Conscience is defiled. Tit. i. 15.

And tho the Jewish Religion was a  
 great Advance from this, yet the Heb. ix. 8.  
 Way into the holiest of all was not made  
 manifest. These Things could not  
 make the Comers thereunto perfect ;  
 there was a Veil upon their Minds,  
 so that they could not stedfastly look to <sup>2 Cor. iii.</sup>  
 the end of those Things that are abo- <sup>13.</sup>  
 lif'd. But, tho the Law made nothing  
 perfect, the bringing in of a better Hope Heb. vii. 19.  
 did, by which Hope we now draw nigh  
 unto

Serm. III unto God. How much easier is it to take the Meaning of a Word, than all the Mystery of a Figure? We in this Ministry use great Plainness of Speech, and don't as Moses, put a Veil upon our Faces; and you all with open Face, behold, as in a Glass, the Glory of the Lord, and are chang'd into the same Image.

§. 3. All the other Dispensations lead to this. They prepar'd the Way; Their Meats and Drinks, their divers Washings, and carnal Ordinances, were only impos'd on them to the time of the Reformation: but Christ is come a High Priest of better things, by a greater and a more perfect Tabernacle, that is to say, not of this Building.

The Prophets that seem'd to be rais'd up for a particular time, inquir'd and searched diligently about this Salvation, who prophesied of the Grace that should come unto you. It put them upon looking forwards, searching what or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ that was in them did signify, when it testify'd before-hand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow; unto whom it was reveal'd, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are

<sup>Heb. ix. 10.</sup>  
<sup>21.</sup>

<sup>1 Pet. i. 10.</sup>  
<sup>11, 12.</sup>

now reported unto you, by them who have preach'd the Gospel, which the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven.

Tho by Afflictions God shows us our Transgression that we have exceeded, yet all the Virtue that these have they take from the Word. *The Prodigal began to be in Want in that far Country; but the good it did him was giving an Impression to what he knew before, that the hired Servants in his Father's House had Bread enough and to spare.* Luke xv. 19.

Nay, Miracles are no further useful than as they are attended with a Blessing upon the Gospel. When the Spirit was pour'd out in the days of Pentecost, it made a mighty Noise; some were mocking and others astonish'd. But the Apostle passes thro his Defence of this, into a long Sermon about Jesus of Nazareth: and the Success of that Day was not their being amaz'd at these new Tongues, but their gladly receiving the Word. *Saul had a Stun given him by a Light from Heaven, above the brightness of the Sun at Noon-day. This put him upon the Enquiry, Who art thou Lord? and upon a full surrender of himself, What wilt thou* Acts ii. 41.

Serm. III thou have me to do ? But he knew  
 not what they should be till he went  
A&S ix. 6, into the City, where *Ananias* preach'd  
17, 18. the Gospel to him.

xxii. 16.

Then the Scales fell off from his Eyes, and his Understanding too ; he began to see clearly every way when he heard that Command, *Arise, why tarriest thou ? be baptized, washing away thy Sins, calling on the Name of the Lord Jesus.* How God may begin with a Sinner, we cannot tell ; but the Spirit of Grace has never done with him till he has *ingrafted the Word in his Heart* : as I shall shew you more at large under the next Head.

IV. The Excellence of Hearing the Gospel may be affirm'd from the Personal Advantage we have by it. I lay down the Argument in these terms, to distinguish it from those Benefits that a free course of the Word brings upon a Nation. If we consider Men in a private Capacity, there is no Interest equal to that which is either convey'd or assur'd to them this way. There are three things that will always be of the greatest Importance to the Nature we carry about with us.

Such

Such a Knowldg as makes up an Serm. III Entertainment to our Reason: Such a Principle as is fitted to our Immortality, and secures it shall be well with us in another World: Those Comforts that arise from a Hope of this, and help us to bear the Fatigue of a Life that is so much encumber'd: All this do we meet with in the Gospel. It is order'd to be made known for every one of these purposes, *For Edification, for Exhortation, and Confirmation.*

S. I. This way we get furnish'd with the most useful Knowldg. Those Observations that the Heathens made of the *Invisible Things,* Rom. i. 20. the *Eternal Power and Godhead,* don't come up to the Brightness of these Discoveries. We have it better by a Revelation than ever they can find it, and know by Faith Heb. xi. 3. that the *Worlds were made by the Word of God.*

'Tis here we come by a true Account, how the Universe has been once destroy'd, and in what manner it shall be again. *The World that then was, being overflowed with Water, perished:* 2 Pet. iii. 6, 9. But the Heavens and

Serm. III the Earth which are now, by the Word  
 of God, are kept in store, reserv'd  
 unto Fire against the Day of Judg-  
 ment, and the Perdition of ungodly  
 Men. This Dissolution is set out  
 to us with a Magnificence that  
 they could never reach: That the  
 Heavens shall pass away with a great  
 Noise, and the Elements melt with fer-  
 vent Heat, and the Earth and the  
 Works that are therein, shall be burnt  
 up. But,

We have other Fountains of  
 Truth which are never so much as  
 open'd elsewhere: 'Tis here that  
 we know, how by one Man Sin en-  
 ter'd into the World, and Death by  
 Sin; and so Judgment has pass'd up-  
 on all Men to Condemnation. And  
 this is a discovery so useful, that  
 Solomon gives us it as the result of  
 all his Pains, when he counted one by  
 one; This only he found, that God made  
 Man upright, and he sought out many  
 Inventions.

By this alone do we come to know  
 the new and living way that is conse-  
 crated for us. Here he has caused the  
 Day-spring to know its place; and  
 from hence does a Light visit those  
 that sit in darkness, and the shadow

Rom. v. 12.  
18.

Eccles. vii.  
39.

Heb. x. 20.

of

of Death. The Method of bringing Serm. III  
 many Sons and Daughters to glory, by <sup>Heb. ii. 10.</sup>  
 making the Captain of their Salvation  
 perfect through his Sufferings; and the  
 Divine Decency of this, how well  
 it became him, of whom are all things,  
 and by whom are all things, is only  
 contain'd in the Gospel. 'Tis <sup>not</sup>  
 according to the Wisdom of this World, <sup>1 Cor. ii.</sup>  
 nor the Princes of this World, which <sup>6, 7.</sup>  
 come to nought; but the Wisdom of  
 God in a Mystery, even the hidden  
 Wisdom that he has ordained before  
 the World unto our Glory. 'Tis so  
 far from having its Rise in human  
 Contrivance, that the Jews who  
 ought to have known it, made it  
 a Stumbling-block; and the politer  
 Sort of Heathens call'd it Foolishness.  
 And yet it's so great an Article of  
 our Ministry, that we determine to  
 know nothing among you, save Jesus  
 Christ and him crucify'd. His bear-  
 ing the Sins of many; his dying, the  
 just for the Unjust; his being de-  
 liver'd for our Offences, are what  
 you will often hear. Nor can there  
 be either gladder Tidings, or subli-  
 mer Knowledg; for without Contro-  
 versy, great is the Mystery of Godli-  
 ness,

Isa. liii. 12.  
 1 Pet. iii.  
 18.  
 Rom. iv.  
 ult.

1 Tim. iii.  
 16.

Serm. III. ness, that God was manifest in the  
 ~~~~~ Flesh.

^{1 Cor. xv.}
3.

Here we know what became of him in all his Removess; that, after he was buried, he rose again according to the Scriptures: That he's gone to be the Head of Angels for Command, and the Head of his Church for Influence. This comes all by the Gospel; for the Comforter is one whom the World cannot receive, because it has not seen him, neither known him. And 'tis he who does us these good Offices, in glorifying Christ, taking what is his, and making it ours.

^{John xvi.}
14.

By the Gospel we know how Justification stands, and where Sanctification rises: What an Harmony there is between our Care to be Holy, and God's having the entire Glory in our Salvation: That we shall give all Diligence, and yet ascribe to him all the Praise.

In the Word of God you have those Accounts of the Angels as ministering Spirits; of a Providence that includes and turns all your Affairs; which lead the Thoughts into a Pleasure they could have nowhere else.

Here

Here we are told of a Resur- Serm. III
rection that the Athenians mock'd at : ~~~~~
And not only assur'd of the Thing,
but admitted into the Manner of
it. That, as God has appointed a ^{Acts xvii.}
day, in which he will judg the World ^{31.}
in Righteousness, by the Man whom
he has ordain'd; whereof he has gi-
ven assurance to all Men, in raising
him from the Dead: so we know
that the Lord shall descend from Hea- ^{1 Thess. iv.}
ven with a Shout: the Angels sound- ^{15, 17.}
ing their Trumpets to empty the
Graves. And the Work is thrown
into this Method; The dead in Christ
shall rise first: And then they who are
alive and remain unto the coming of
the Lord, shall be caught up together
with them in the Air, and so be ever
with the Lord.

This is your Entertainment in
Hearing the Gospel: You have the
whole Process of Divine Love; The
Hope of his Calling, the Riches of the ^{Ephes. i. 18.}
Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints,
and the exceeding greatness of his
Power to them that believe. 'Tis not
to set you a doting about Questions and
Strifes of Words: you are not giving
heed to Fables and endless Genealogies,
which minister Disputes rather than

Serm. III godly Edifying. But here is the most proper Food for Reason : *The riches of the full assurance of Understanding, and the acknowledgment of the Mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ ; in whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.*

^{Col. ii. 3.} §. 2. Hearing the Word is a means both of beginning and carrying on that Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord. The Rom. i. 16. Gospel of Christ is *the Power of God to the Salvation of every one that believes.* And, as I hinted before, tho the first Impression is often-times made by something else, yet the New Nature is not form'd without an application of this to the Soul.

James i. 18. *Of his own Will, and in his own way, he begets us again ; but sooner or later it is by the Word of Truth.* 'Tis by this means that we draw

^{1 Pet. i. 23.} in the heavenly Life ; being born again, not of the corruptible Seed, but the incorruptible, the Word of God which lives and abides for ever. This was the Key by which God opened the Heart of Lydia. And tho he began with Arguments of Terror and Thunder upon the Sailor, yet this produc'd in him no Resolution

to

to be sav'd, but only a design to Serm. III
stab himself. That which brought ~~the~~
him to spare one Life and seek a-
nother, was, the Apostle's directing
him to believe in the Lord Jesus.
And how fast did the Change come
on after this? Before, his Soul was
all in a flutter, he neither knew
what to think, nor what to do.
But these Tidings break the way:

When they spake to him the Word of ^{A&s xvi.}
the Lord, and to all that were in his ^{27, 28, 31,}
House, he took them the same
Hour of the Night, and washed their
Stripes; and was baptiz'd, he and all
his straitway: And when he had
brought them into his House, he set
Meat before them, and rejoiced, be-
lieving in God.

'Tis at this Gate that the King
of Glory enters in: Faith comes by ^{Rom. x.}
Hearing; and that you know is the ^{17.}
leading Grace: It works by Love, it
spreads into Duty, and breathes in
Assurance. Ye trusted in Christ, af- ^{Eph. i. 13.}
ter ye heard the Word of Truth, the
Gospel of your Salvation; in whom af-
ter ye believed, ye were sealed with
the holy Spirit of Promise. And
therefore when you refuse this Duty,
it's giving your Negative to the

Serm. III Happiness that may follow it. You
 bear, that your Souls may live: And if
 Isa. iv. 2. you put the Word of God far from
 Acts xiii. 46. you, you judg your selves unworthy of
 everlasting Life. God takes it to be
 Psal. lxxxvi. 11. a throwing off himself; My People
 would not hearken to my Voice, Israel
 would have none of me. Receiving
 John i. 12. Christ is entring within the Power of
 being the Sons of God. What the
 iii. 33. Evangelist calls receiving him, the
 Baptist represents by receiving his
 Testimony.

'Tis true, this Treasure is lodg'd
 in earthen Vessels: we cannot convey
 the Life we speak of; the utmost
 we can do is but to prophesy upon
 dry Bones, and call in help from the
 Eze. xxxvii. 9. four Winds to breathe upon these slain,
 that they may live. But yet, when
 1 Thess. ii. 13. you receive the Word which you hear
 of us, not as the Word of Man, but as
 it is in truth the Word of God, it will
 work effectually in them that believe.

And as this is a means of begin-
 1 Pet. ii. 2. ning the Life of God, so as new-born
 Babes we shall desire the sincere Milk
 of the Word, that we may grow thereby.
 Christ feeds us the same way that
 he quicken'd us: And the Pastors
 and Teachers that he has left with
 his

his Church, are for the Work of the Serm. III
Ministry, the perfecting of the Saints,
the edifying of the Body of Christ, till we all come to a fulness of Stature.

Ephes. iv.
12, 13.

So that for any to say, We will come no more at thee, is fixing themselves under a deficiency, that they ought to fill up as fast as they can: 'Tis making a Resolution, that they will not be compleat. But this is Language that cannot be expected from a Convert; for, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, you will come unto him as to a living Stone: To be rooted and built up in him, establish'd in the Faith as ye have been taught, and abounding therein with Thanksgiving.

Pet. ii.
3, 4.

Col. ii. 7.

§. 3. This is the best means of your Comfort; a Blessing very useful in so bad a World, tho' not essential to the Interest we have in a better. 'Tis thus we know a gladness above the increase of Corn and Wine, beyond the force of Shame and Torment; a Joy that can drown a Palace, and glorify a Prison. This is my Comfort in my Affliction, saith David, that thy Word has quicken'd me. And the publick way of hearing it, gave him the highest of his

Serm. III Pleasures. This he begs for in the

^{Psal. lxiii.} Wilderness of Judah; May I see thy

^{2.} Power and thy Glory, as I have seen

thee in the Sanctuary. Many a Temp-

tation has prov'd too hard for us

in our Solitude, but God has met

us with his Blessing in the more

open Visions, and made his own

House the Place of Execution to

those fears. Thus unwieldy did the

Psalmist find his Envy at the Pro-

ver. 13. sperity of the foolish: When he thought

to know it, it was too painful for him,

till he went into the Sanctuary, and

then he understood their End. Upon

which he concludes, Surely it is good

for me to draw nigh unto God. And

tho the Mercy may not come in at

the time of our Attendance, yet

what happens there, usually leads

the way to it. The Watchmen that

go about the City found me, to whom

I said, Saw ye him whom my Soul

loveth? It was but a little that I

passed from them, but I found him.

And therefore, to forsake the As-

sembling of your selves together, is re-

fusing to be comforted. It is no won-

der that Christians are so melan-

choly in their own Houses, when

this House lies waste. 'Twould be

Can. iii.

3, 4.

ver. ult.

strange they should have those Measures of Assurance that they complain for, when they keep out of the way of it. 'Tis suppos'd, that a Man does not only fear the Lord, but hearken to the Voice of his Servant; and tho' he walks in darkness, and has no Light, yet he may trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. But to expect a Satisfaction any other way, is walking in the light of your own Fire, and the Sparks that your selves have kindled. And God will vindicate the Institution that you have neglected; for this he gives you under his Hand, *That you shall lie down in Sorrow.* But Oh ! Blessed are they who hear the joyful Sound; those shall walk on in the Light of God's Countenance: He is the Glory of their Strength. We shall be satisfy'd with the goodness of thine House, even of thine holy Temple.

Psal. lxxxii.
15, 16, 17.

xxxvi. 8.

V. Preaching and Hearing the Gospel, is the best Friend to a publick National Interest:

As will be fully seen, when the Kingdoms of the World are wise enough

Rev. xi. 5.

Serm. III enough to become the Kingdoms of the
 ~~~~~ Lord and his Christ. The Leaves of  
 the Tree of Life, which may be un-  
 derstood of this Ministry, are to be

Rev. xxii. 2. for the healing of the Nations. Happy  
 Psal. cxliv. is the People that are in such a Case;  
 ult. yea, happy are the People whose God  
 is the Lord. The Gospel more emi-  
 nently bears Date from our Lord's  
 ascending up on high; it was then  
 receiv'd Gifts for Men, even for  
 the Rebellious, that the Lord God  
 might dwell among them. Now this  
 is united with the Defence he gives  
 our common Liberties. For when

Psal. xlvii.  
 5, 8, 9. we are told, that God is gone up with  
 a Shout, the Lord with the Sound of  
 the Trumpet: 'tis added, God is  
 King of all the Earth; God reigneth  
 over the Heathen. He does not only  
 sit on the Throne of his Holiness; but  
 the Reason why the Princes of the  
 People are gathered together, is, be-  
 cause the Shields of the Earth be-  
 long unto God.

Psal. lxxii.  
 9. 'Tis said of the Mes-  
 siah, that he will break in pieces the  
 Oppressor. In his Days the Righteous  
 shall flourish, and abundance of Peace,  
 so long as the Sun and Moon endures.  
 And in order to that, his Enemies  
 shall

shall lick the Dust, and all the Kings Serm.III  
fall down before him.

And, as the Word of God is the great Instrument of his Empire, so it will be the means of promoting these Effects. When the Knowledge of the Lord covers the Earth, as the Waters do the Sea; 'tis the very thing that will put an end to all hurting and destroying in his Holy Mount. You shall see how these are connected: he threatens the Assyrians, Nah. i. 10. That whilst they be folden together as Thorns, and drunken as Drunkards, they shall be devour'd as Stubble fully dry. This refers to a Time when there was a single Person very eminent either in Niniveh for Insolence, or in Judah for Treachery; There is one come out of thee, who imagines Evil against the Land, a wicked Counsellor. This is no Security from the Vengeance that is to fall on those Enemies. He will, as he says in another place, Cut off from Babylon, Name ver. 14. and Remnant, Son and Nephew. The Lord has given Commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy Name be sown: I will make thy Grave, for thou art vile. And how is this to be brought about, but

Sermon but by Preaching of the Word? The very Text I am upon, is repeated both as the Introduction and Consequence of such an Escape: *Bebold, upon the Mountains, the Feet of him that bringeth good Tidings, that publisheth Peace.* Now this it does these three ways.

Ver. 15.

§. 1. As it unites good People to one another.

Psal. lv. 14.

The Gospel gives you a Figure in the World, from the mutual Delight and Confidence it produces. You can never take sweeter Counsel together, than when you walk to the House of the Lord in Company. Jerusalem

cxxii. 3,4. that is above, is built like that below, a City that is compact together. Thither the Tribes go up, even the Tribes of the Lord: such as are comprehended in a Relation to him. The Union of good People, in the solemn Exercises of Worship, has sometimes set them out as a formidable Body, to those that would have swallow'd them up.

Psal. xlvi. 8.

When God made Zion the Mountain of his Holiness, the City of the great King: When the Jews were flocking thither, both for Worship and Protection, He was known in her Palaces

ces for a Refuge. The Kings were Serm. III  
assembled, they passed by together : They  
saw it, and so they marvell'd. They  
were troubled, and hasted away. They  
have the face of a People of one  
Heart and one Soul. When Chris-  
tians are thus united together in  
Love, their Faith has an easier  
Prospect of the Blessings God has  
promis'd, and disposes to Union  
not in a separate Interest, but for  
a Common and National Good. We  
have thought of thy Loving-Kindness,  
O God, in the midst of thy Temple.

§. 2. You have no better Arguments  
for the Liberty that ought to be  
dear, than what you meet with in  
the Gospel.

Stupidity has nothing to do with  
our Religion ; we are warranted and  
allow'd by the Gospel of Christ,  
to be tender of our Civil Liber-  
ties. Indeed some who have defiled  
the Priesthood, have made Religion  
a political Shackle. The Zeal they  
have shown to enslave Free Nations,  
has given an Occasion to the In-  
fidelity and Atheism, because of  
which the Land mourns. These are  
such pernicious ways, that 'tis no <sup>2 Pet. ii. 2.</sup> wonder the way of Truth is evil  
spoken

Serm. III spoken of. How unlikely is it that  
 People should think those Men have  
 any true regard to their Happiness  
 in another World, who do all they  
 can to make them miserable in this?  
 Nothing can be more unsuitable  
 than that they who say, Christ has  
 bought us with a Price, should them-  
 selves be guilty of selling us to  
 Tyrants. Their Doctrine goes by  
 no other Name, For through Cov-  
 etousness, shall they with feign'd words  
 make Merchandise of you. This is  
 a Temper so cruel, that they are  
 called grievous Wolves, that spare not  
 Acts xx. 29. the very Flock. But 'tis all wrong,  
 that those Tongues that should pre-  
 serve the Law of Kindness, prove  
 an unruly Evil, full of deadly poison.  
 Therewith bless they God, even the  
 Father; that is their Office: and  
 therewith curse they Men, who are  
 made after the similitude of God.  
 Out of the same Mouth proceedeth  
 Blessing and Cursing, Gospel and  
 Slavery: My Brethren, these things  
 ought not so to be. Does a Foun-  
 tain send forth at the same Place,  
 sweet Water and bitter?

James iii.  
8, 9.

Christ came upon another Er-  
 rand, if the Virgin Mary sung right,

To

To scatter the Proud in the Imagination of their Hearts, to put down the Mighty from their Seats. Nay, if you will take the account that he himself gives of his own Commission, 'tis to preach the Gospel, and proclaim the acceptable Year of the Lord,

Luke i. 51.  
52.

Luke iv. 18,  
19.

Serm. III  
Savas  
S. & Eg-  
way.

Lord, the day of Vengeance of our God; to comfort them that mourn, give deliverance to the Captives; to open the Prison-Doors to them that are bound. The Gospel by its Effects upon the Minds of Men, has a tendency to accomplish these Purposes even in a literal Sense. Thus he taught others, and thus he acted himself. For 'tis strange in the Conduct of his little Family, that selling their Garments to provide a sword should be a Duty, if drawing it in their just Defence were a damnable Sin: Tho upon the Design our Saviour had then in view, he order'd Peter to put it up again. The Apostles understood no Authority over their Consciences, but thought it better to obey God than Man; and no Tyranny over their Lives, to which they must submit, when it was in their power to help it. The very Doctrine of Redemp-

a Ver. 22, 36.

Serm. III Redemption carries this in it, *ye  
are bought with a Price, be ye not the  
Servants of Men.*

<sup>1 Cor. vii.  
23.</sup>

S. 3. This is a Method of being inspir'd with the truest *Courage.*

It has always been the Trick of Tyranny, to take the Bible out of the way. Falling Churches and standing Armies are two Articles of the same Policy. 'Tis very unjust to call those Assemblies seditious, that are purely for Divine Worship; tho Satan and the Grandees of the World are afraid of them. But Men are not oblig'd to be Slaves, because they are Christians. A free Course of the Gospel inspires a prudent Zeal, and forms the truest Courage; such Men will value a publick Interest, and believe an omnipotent Alliance. 'Tis want of Faith and Seriousness that Men are no more brave. 'Tis highly probable, when the Kingdom of the Redeemer shall prosper in the World, God will chuse such to be Instruments of his Providence as fear his Name, and love his Truth.

He may use whom he pleases in his own Service. He that could make

make Balaam bless Israel, can em- Serm.III  
ploy the vilest Men to save them; ~~~~~  
but 'tis not likely he will always do  
so. One that profanes his Name,  
is but a wretched Tool of his Glory.  
Nor can that Man who prostitutes  
the Sabbath to his Pleasure, and  
the Bible to his Jeſt, go out so well  
furnish'd as other People.

There is no being ſure of his In-  
tegrity, who will venture upon his  
own Damnation. And especially,  
as Times are coming on when Christ  
will take to himſelf his great Power  
and reign, we may ſuppoſe God will  
more fit his Servants to his Work;  
and that the Liberties of Nations  
will be committed to them, who are  
of clean Hands and a pure Heart, who  
have not lift up their Soul to Va-  
nity, nor ſworn deceitfully. We may  
despair of any great good from  
those, whose Zeal is only kept alive  
by Revelling, Banqueting, and abomi-  
nable Idolatry. If they are above  
the Worship of God, their politi-  
cal Notions want riveting. They  
who break off Communion, who  
separate themſelves, being sensual, ha-  
ving not the Spirit, lie more open to  
the

Serm. III the Temptations of an Enemy.

*Such as do wickedly against the Co-*  
*Dan. xi. 32. venant, shall be corrupt by Flattery;*  
*but the People that know their God,*  
*shall be strong and do Exploits.*

VI. The *Opposition* that Satan has given to the Preaching of the Gospel, is an Argument of the Excellence there is in it: That 'tis something he either envies or fears: 'tis a Battery rais'd against his Kingdom, and what he knows will bring it down sooner or later. This makes him *rage*, from an Opinion that *his time is short*, as will appear from the Evidence of three Particulars. The Scripture has charg'd him with making opposition to the Gospel: The greatest promoters of his Interest do abhor the Work of Preaching: Nothing does so much advance what he loves, as laying this aside.

§. 1. His Enmity to this Work, is what we have many accounts of. He does Ministers all the harm he can. *I Paul would have come unto you once and again, but Satan hindred me.* Besides the advantages he takes from

<sup>1</sup> Theff. ii.  
18.

from the like Passions that we have Serm. III  
with you, he throws other bars in         
our way. He stirs up a Persecution  
against them that bear the Testimony Rev. ii. 10.  
of Jesus. *The Devil shall cast some*  
*of you into Prison.* And he uses all  
the Methods that are possible to  
blast our Endeavours. When the  
Word is sown by the Way-side, the  
Fowls of the Air, the Wicked one, comes  
and picks it up. Thus our Gospel is <sup>2</sup> Cor. iv.  
bid to them that are lost: In whom <sup>3, 4.</sup>  
the God of this World has blinded the  
Eyes of them that believe not, lest the  
Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ  
shine into their Hearts.

§. 2. We may observe he has an  
establish'd Interest in the World. *The*  
*Man of Sin has his coming,* makes his  
Entry according to the Working of <sup>2</sup> Theff. ii.  
Satan. Now these are known <sup>9.</sup>  
enemies to the Gospel; their gaudy  
Temples are not for Preaching, but  
mere Chambers of Imagery, full of  
detestable things. And when Satan  
can insinuate himself into Kings  
Houses, he leads them on into all  
the Violence that Cruelty can act.  
Preaching the Gospel shall be Tre-  
son, Schism, Heresy, Blasphemy, and  
every

Serm. III every thing that is vile enough to  
 be punish'd. All sorts of Vengeance  
 have been taken on it : losing of E-  
 states, Banishment from Corpora-  
 tions, Dungeons, Gallies, Scaffolds,  
 Fires, Wracks, and Famine, were  
 thought little enough for doing no  
 more than showing, *that the Lord  
 is gracious.* The Quarrel is main-

*Rev. xii. 9.* tain'd on one side by *the Devil and  
 his Angels:* By whom we may un-  
 derstand not only the inferior Spi-  
 rits, who take their Orders from  
*Beelzebub, the Prince of Devils,* but  
 such as he can influence among  
 Men, however they are dignify'd  
 or distinguish'd. *False Apostles,*  
*deceitful Workers,* who transform  
 themselves into the *Apostles of Christ,*  
 are said to be his *Ministers,* whose  
*End shall be according to their  
 Works.*

S. 3. His Interest really advances  
 by the Decline of Preaching. Where  
 this is laid aside, he presently set-  
 tles a Kingdom of Darkness ; as any  
 one may see in the Popish Coun-  
 tries. He'll allow them their Shrines  
 and Crosses, and as many Saints as  
 they will canonize ; he loses no-  
 thing

thing by their Penances and Pilgri- Serm.III  
mages, their Holy Days and pre- ~~~~~  
tended Miracles : But it's the  
Knowledg of God's Word that  
falls with the greatest Weight up-  
on his Kingdom ; and therefore it  
is that he strikes at. When he has  
diffus'd such a Stupidity thro a  
Nation, to keep 'em as much his  
own as he has made them, Preach-  
ing the Gospel becomes the least  
part of their Concern. And I fear  
he has gone a great way with those  
who say they value not hearing a  
Sermon, or think they have no  
more to do in Publick Worship  
than take a part in the Prayers.  
What a Vengeance is levell'd at that  
Opinion ! *He that turns away his Ear* Prov.xxviii  
*from hearing the Law, even his Prayer* <sup>9.</sup>  
*shall be an Abomination ?*

VII. Preaching the Gospel is what  
shall have an Honour put upon it in  
the other World. Not that it must  
be continu'd there ; for the Throne Rev. xxii..  
of God and the Lamb is in that City,  
5, 6.  
and his Servants shall serve him, and they  
shall see his Face, and his Name shall be  
in their Foreheads. But it's the Rule  
of

Serm. III of your Judgment: The Plan of  
 ~~~ your Happiness: The Memorial of  
 God's Grace.

John xii.
48.

§. I. By the Word that you hear
 you shall be judg'd in the last day.
 Every Sermon will be your Con-
 viction, either now, or at the Bar
 of a righteous God. That Truth
 that you don't receive in the love of
 it, will be put into your Indictment.
 And this Honour is what our Mi-
 nistry is to have from every one

Rom. ii. 16. who comes under it. There is a
 day that God shall judge the secrets
 of Men by Jesus Christ, according to
 my Gospel. By this Rule you're to
 be examin'd, and therefore see how
 well it fits you now. They that
 are Embassadors to you, beseeching
 you to be reconcil'd, will then be
 Witnesses against you, as a People
 that would take no warning. Christ
 Jesus, the righteous Judg, will sit
 upon the great white Throne; and no
 sooner is the Judgment set, but the
 Books are open'd, and the dead are
 judged out of those things that are
 written in the Books. Whether you
 will hear now, or forbear; yet then
 his Excellency will fall upon you, and

Rev. xx.
11, 12.

his

his Dread make you afraid : when Serm III his Voice begins to shake the Heavens and the Earth.

§. 2. This is the *Plan* of your Happiness. The Joy that you're admitted into, is both describ'd and assur'd by the Promises of the Gospel. God will have every Perfection of his Nature a sharer in the Glory of your Salvation. His Mercy appears in the Misery where he found you : His Holiness in the Image he has given you : His Justice in the *Lamb that has been slain* : His Power in the Conduct that has brought you thither. But besides all this, he will have his Truth to be known ; and that must be by setting out, in an eternal View, the Covenant that gave you the Promise, and the Felicity that answer'd it : tho' it's true, no Characters can reach it ; the Things are too big for any Words ; *It does not fully appear what we shall be*, yet we have a general Light into it. And when we come thither, it will be an Entertainment for ever to observe, that this is such a sort of Happiness as God always us'd to tell us of,

Serm. III and what our Faith was most willing to chuse.

§. 3. The Gospel will be the Memorial of the Grace that God convey'd into you by it. 'Twill lie open, not for your Information; because then the Light runs in by a better and an easier way. The knowledg of that World comes by seeing: But there will be a rememb'ring the Lord afar off, a calling over all the Testimony that he has given to the Word of his Grace. Every Command and Promise that has fallen with any weight upon your Minds, will come in among the Entertainments there; that it may for ever be own'd he has led you in a right way to the City of Habitation.

All the Relations that are founded in Nature shall fall with it. In the Resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in Marriage: But yet there seems to be a Reserve of Eternity, for those Offices that are done in a spiritual way. The Apostle talks of his presenting them as a chaste Virgin before Christ, whom he had spous'd unto him. And the great Circle of Honour is upon this Foundation, That Christ shall be glorified

in you, and you in him ; because our Serm. IH
Testimony was believed among you. ~~~~~
What's our Crown of rejoicing ? Are not
even ye, not only now, but in the
Presence of the Lord Jesus, and at his
coming ? Tis but a while we are to
be among you ; but I hope the Re-
flections on the good that is done,
will be everlasting : And in the day Phil. ii. 14.
of Christ Jesus we shall rejoice, that
we have not run in vain, nor labour'd
in vain.

СЛУХОМ Я ИЗ

185. V. 223 H. 1

OBJECTIONS answer'd

AGAINST

Hearing the Word.

Earle, Jabez

SERMON IV.

I THESS. V. 20.

Despise not Prophesying.

I Am appointed to answer *Objec-*
tions against Hearing the Word,
as it has been explain'd, prov'd
to be a Duty, and represented as an
excellent one. I propose the Text
I have read as the *Foundation* of my
Design, and hope it will not appear
improper for the Occasion, if you
consider two things. *First*, That
Pro-

Prophesying in the New Testament Serm.IV
doth most * commonly signify ex-
plaining the deep *Mysteries of the Go-*
spel, † expounding *Scripture,* || applying
God's Word to the Hearers Edification,
Exhortation, and Comfort: Which
is what we commonly call Preach-
ing. *Secondly,* That though in the
Apostle's Times, this Prophesying
was under the special *Inspiration* of
the Holy Ghost, and so one of those
Spiritual Gifts, which are now ceas'd,
having answer'd their end, *viz.* The
introducing and settling Christianity
where it was oppos'd by Idolatry and Superstition, under the Protection
of National Establishments, and the greatest Names in the
World: Tho, I say, that special Inspiration
is withdrawn, and one particular great end answer'd; yet
Publick speaking to *Edification, Exhortation and Comfort*, under the ordinary Influences of the Holy Ghost,
must be acknowledg'd necessary in all Ages of the Church, by those
who wish well to the Interest of the

* Scot's *Christian Life*, Part 2. Vol. 2. p. 63.

† Whithby in 1 Cor. xiv. 3.

|| Baxter in loc.

Serm. IV Redeemer, and the Souls of Men.

This is that *Prophesying* which we are not to despise, if we have now any concern in the Text; which I must confess I am not willing to give up, and heartily wish that some great and learned Men had not taken such pains to make so great a part of the New Testament of but very little Use to the latter Ages of the Church: And can see no Reason why the Scriptures should not be interpreted in as great a Latitude, and in view of as general Usefulness, as in justice to the *holy Men of old*, and the most holy Inspirer of them, can be allow'd. Upon which account I am glad to find that the Exhortation, *Pray without ceasing*, is not also confin'd by these Interpreters themselves, to that which they call *praying in the Holy Ghost*, that is, under an immediate Inspiration; seeing that also was a spiritual Gift in the first Ages of the Church. And I desire leave to make as general a Use of the Text before me, *Despise not Prophesying*, and paraphrase it thus; Despise not, that is, value highly those Endeavours of your Teachers

ver. 17.

to

to edify you, exhort and comfort Serm. IV
you, whether they act under the *~~~~~*
special Inspirations of God's Spirit,
or have only the ordinary Assurances
promis'd by our Saviour, when he ^{Mat. xxviii.}
engag'd to be with his Ministers to ²⁰⁻
the end of the World.

However, if I have miss'd the
Sense of my Text, I shall take care
that nothing offer'd upon this Oc-
casion depend merely upon the Ex-
position which I have given of the
Words; and then all my Fault will
be, that I have taken my Rise from
an improper Text, which I hope
will be forgiven me.

Now the Objections made against
Hearing may, for Order's sake, be
rank'd under four general Heads.

I. Such as are taken from the *Mater-*
ter preach'd.

II. The *Manner* of Preaching.

III. The *Persons* Preaching.

IV. The *Persons* preach'd to, or
Hearers.

I. From the *Matter* preach'd. And
here it may be objected,

§. i. Is what you preach the *Word*
of *God?* You begin your Discourses

Serm.IV with a [Thus saith the Lord] but have you any Authority for such an awful Introduction? Is there not Reason to suspect, that under this cover you impose upon us your own Imaginations, and pass that upon us which God *never commanded, neither came it into his Mind?* To this I answer,

That we don't desire you to believe, that every thing we deliver in a Sermon, is the Word of God, *barely because we profess our selves God's Ministers, and enter upon our Work in his Name.* We very well know that the most pernicious Errors have been usher'd into the World under *that glorious and fearful Name, The Lord our God:* And 'tis one part of our Busines to give People warning, that the Devil can disguise himself under the Appearance of an *Angel of Light;* and his Ministers hide the *grievous Wolf under Sheep's clothing.* Therefore we direct you to the *Law and to the Testimony,* bid you search the *Scriptures,* to see whether the things we speak are *Words becoming sound Doctrine.* We encourage you in the Use of your *Understandings,* would have you

you prove all things, judg for your Serm. IV selves, and hold fast that which is ~~good~~^{good}. We recommend the Example of the noble Bereans, and scorn, ^{A&S xvii,} with the old Pharisees, to be blind ^{11.} Leaders of the blind ; or with the Papists and other Enthusiasts, to pretend to be every one of us infallible under the Spirit's influence ; or to have an Infallibility among us, tho we know not where to fix it. We scorn to be guilty of so mean an Insolence, as to pretend our selves to have *Dominion over your Faith*: we ^{2 Cor. xi.} leave that to him whose right it ^{24.} is, while our utmost Ambition is to be *helpers of your Joy*. And suffer me to say, that the Ministers of our Denomination, (for the very term * Party, sounds harsh in our Ears) have the least Reason in the World to be suspected of such a Design. It's our great Fault, it seems, that we plead for every private Man's Right to judg for himself ; and 'tis a Charge against us, that such as We have contributed to spoil the hopeful Project of resto-

* Vid. Mr. Murray's Preface to *Closet Devotions.*

Serm. IV ring implicit Faith and blind Obedience, to which the glorious Reformers in the two last Ages gave such a Defeat, as is matter of constant Joy to us, and vexation to the Enemies of the true Reform'd Religion, who have more than once *in their Rebellion, appointed a Captain to return to that Bondage.*

We therefore upon all Occasions declare, that if what we preach be not the Word of God; that is, really and virtually contain'd in it, or by just and fair Consequences drawn from it, you may despise it at Pleasure: if it be, excuse us if we say, reject it at your Peril. But the Objection may be pursu'd, and we may be ask'd in the

2d place. Suppose what you preach be agreeable to the Bible, how does it appear that that Book it self is of Divine Original? If this matter be not clear'd, you must allow us to incur no Danger, in *despising* what you call *Propheſyings.* Answ. If the Scriptures are not the Word of God, we are indeed oblig'd to give up the Cause. But suffer us to offer that which we count Evidence in the matter,

matter, that they are what we pretend 'em to be. Serm. IV

I. It's very *probable* that God would give a written Law. I take it for granted, not only that there is a God, but that this God governs the World, and particularly that Man is the Object of moral Government, the Instrument of which is what we call a Law. This is not deny'd by those who acknowledg Natural Religion, tho' they deny Revelation. Now there are some things that render it highly *probable*, that God would give us that Law *in Writing*. I might mention his *Goodness* and *Love* to his Creatures, of which this would be an eminent Instance, to let 'em have that Duty clearly laid down, in order to their more certain attaining the End of it, the *Salvation* of their Souls. And I might take notice of the unhappy Circumstances Mankind is apparently under, which call for such a Relief. How far are we all sunk in Ignorance, Sensuality and Love of the World? How short are our Lives? How busy our Enemies? &c.

But

Serm.IV But this alone will not amount
~~~~~ to Evidence. And therefore,

2. This Book, which we call the Bible, pretends to be a Revelation of God's Will, and Signification of what he expects from his Subjects. It is given forth in the *Name of the Lord*, and therefore its Pretensions ought to be examin'd. This is a Homage due to the Supreme Being, that whatever comes to us in his Name should be consider'd, unless it has in its Forehead evident and notorious Marks of Imposture: and this is the Case of the only Book that disputes the Point with the Holy Oracles; namely, the *Alcoran of Mahomet*, a Man can't read a Page in it but he may even feel its Author; but the Bible enters its Plea at another rate. And therefore,

3. The Pretensions of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are supported with all the Evidence that the Nature of the thing admits, which ought always to be judg'd sufficient by a wise Man. I shall not enter into the Detail of this matter; but offer two things, which,

which, if they can be made out, Serm. IV  
the Decision must be in favour of ~~the~~  
the Bible: As,

(1.) The Matter it contains is  
worthy of God. No Revelation can  
maintain it self, that can't enter  
this Plea: For Revelation supposes  
Natural Religion, and can never  
contradict it. Now, upon a strict  
and impartial Enquiry, all the Laws  
and Ordinances of the Old and  
New Testament are perfectly agree-  
able to those *Notions* we have of  
God, which are the Foundation of  
all Religion. And tho it's true that  
the profane Wits of the Age have  
cavil'd plentifully at some Passages  
in the Holy Writ, yet it must be  
own'd that there is hardly an In-  
stance in which they have not been  
answer'd, to the Satisfaction of so-  
ber and impartial Searchers after  
Truth. And if there be any thing  
which has hitherto puzzled Inter-  
preters, we ought in all reason to  
suppose the Difficulty to lie in our  
Ignorance of the Original *Language*  
of the Old Testament, and antient  
*Customs* of the Eastern People; and  
when we consider how many things  
have been clear'd since the Revival  
of

Serm. IV of Learning in the two or three last Ages, that seem'd incapable of a Solution, we may reasonably hope that, by the Blessing of God upon further Endeavours, the remaining Difficulties shall also in time be remov'd ; unless, perhaps, there be weight in what some have suggested, that some things are design'd by God to continue with a Cloud about 'em, to exercise and humble the most Inquisitive, and be a judicial Stumbling-Block in the way of leud and profane Scoffers.

(2.) The Writings of the Old and New Testament, which we call the Bible, are actually own'd by God, with the sufficient Attestation of *Miracles*. I should wrong the Subject, if I should pretend to enter into Particulars ; I shall only observe, that the Credit of both Testaments is sufficiently establish'd by the Resurrection of Christ ; and every Christian is willing to put the whole matter upon this Issue : If *Christ be not risen, then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith is also vain.* If he be risen, no reasonable Man can gainsay or resist the Evidence which results from thence in favour

of the Holy Oracles. I am not expected to offer upon this occasion those Reasons which demonstrate that Christ is risen, nor can I possibly do it to that Advantage in which you have it done in a late excellent Piece, intituled, a \* *Demonstration of the Resurrection of Christ*, to which I refer you for full Satisfaction in this matter. I come next to the

Serm. IV  
~~~~~  
* By Mr.
Ditton.

§. 2. Objection from the matter preach'd. The things we are to hear, may some say, are *too high* for us; they exceed our Capacity, and are above our Reach, and therefore we can never be oblig'd to attend to them.

Answ. 1. They are indeed many of 'em too high to be fully comprehended. The Doctrine of the Trinity, the Decrees, &c. are vastly sublime, and we must not expect an adequate Notion of such things as very probably exceed the Capacity of an Angel. And yet this Objection would also lie against natural Religion it self, the Nature and Perfections of God being too great for finite Minds to comprehend. Job xi. 7. *Canst thou by searching find out God?* &c.

Answ.

Answ. 2. Yet there is nothing that Ministers are oblig'd to preach, and People to hear, which is too high to be sufficiently understood to answer the End of Preaching and Hearing, *viz.* That we may be made wise unto Salvation. The most profound Mysteries lie so far level to the meanest Capacities, that they may understand as much of 'em as is necessary in their present Circumstances, *i. e.* enough to excite their Adoration and Reverence; and engage them to all that Duty and Obedience, which God requires, in order to their Present and Eternal Welfare.

Answ. 3. Many of those things which ignorant uninstructed People count too high for them, are such as they *may* come to understand very clearly, if they will be at the pains to attend diligently to the Means of Instruction, which are suited to make wise the Simple. And blessed be God there have not been wanting Instances of such as from the grossest Ignorance, have, by the Blessing of God upon the Preaching of the Word, been brought to so good an Understanding in the

great Mystery of Godliness, as to be Serm. IV
the Wonder and Joy of their Teachers. Let but People attend to the
Ordinance of God with the same
Application as they do to the In-
structions of those who are to teach
them the Mysteries of Trade, or
Matters of abstruse Learning ; and
the Foundation of this Objection
would appear altogether insufficient
to support it. And so I come to,

§. 3. Another Objection from the
Matter preach'd. These things, will
some say, are plain and obvious to
every body ; and what we that hear
know as well as you that preach.
Thus we are attack'd from opposite
Quarters, and the Objections are as
inconsistent with one another as
with the Truth it self. But in an-
swer,

i. The Objectors may not be quite
so much Masters of these things as
they imagine ; and the good Opinion
they have of themselves, is no small
Evidence of it. It's an old and just
Observation, that Confidence is of-
ten retain'd by Folly and Ignorance,
whilst Modesty attends upon true
Wisdom, and a well-furnish'd Mind.
It should surely teach the self-con-
ceited

Serm. IV. citated Part of those whom Ministers are appointed to instruct, a little more Humility, to consider the Confessions and Complaints of the greatest Men that have, under all Advantages, spent the best of their Time in searching after Divine Truth, how small a Progress they have made, and how much still lies undiscover'd. And it would even in the Province I have undertaken, justify a little *Indignation*, to observe how boldly many that are ignorant and unlearned, pronounce in those Matters that have exercis'd the Minds of the greatest Men in all Ages. But,

2. Suppose you are literally as wise as your Teachers, you may *still* learn. While they are studying to preach to you, they are themselves learning; and while they spend their Time in Endeavours to grow in Knowledg for your sakes, are they not likely to have something to offer which it may be worth your while to hear, on a Lord's Day, after your own Time has been spent in a necessary Attendance on the Affairs, Businesses, and Pleasures of Life, the main Part of the six preceding Days?

3. And suppose otherwise, That Serm:IV you already know as much as you are ever like to learn; please to consider, that you certainly need to be put in mind of what you know ever so well; for farther Enlightening, a fresher Savour, and a deeper and more lasting Influence. An Evangelist needed to be put in mind of the most essential Article of our Religion; 2 Tim. ii. 8. Remember that Jesus Christ, of the Seed of David, was rais'd from the Dead, &c. And is it not necessary for us, who are every way so inferior to those Apostolical Worthies, who enjoy'd also that special Gift of the Spirit which is now withdrawn? Consider the Narrowness, Vanity, and Fickleness of human Minds, the Variety and Impetuosity of our Passions, the importunate Solicitations of the Flesh and Devil, and the numberless Avocations by worldly Affairs, we cannot but own our selves subject to; and judg if we do not need a standing Monitor in reference to that vast Compass of Duty which is before us, and if the Preaching of the Word be not profitable for Doctrine, 2 Tim. iii. 16. for Reproof, for Correction, Instruction in

Serm.IV in Righteousness. Suffer me to add
one thing more, which, upon Enquiry, will be found a certain Truth; That more People are undone, in reference to both Worlds, for want of *considering* what they very well know, than for want of knowing what concerns their Real Welfare. I can instance in nothing that is more obvious than the Busines of our *Mortality*, which yet one of the wisest Nations that ever was, thought fit with all the Formality imaginable to put their triumphing *Generals* and Emperors in mind of, when they were receiving the highest Honours that human Nature was capable of.

4. Let me answer this Objection yet farther, That as Preaching and Hearing the Word has been prov'd to be an Ordinance of God, his *Blessing* may be expected upon his own Appointment. And tho' I do but mention this, yet I must be allow'd to say, it is of the utmost Consequence to be consider'd by all serious Minds, who are in good earnest about the great things that belong to their Eternal Peace and Welfare. And therefore I desire that

that what my Brethren have offer'd Serm.IV
upon this Head may be duly weigh'd
and regarded. Certainly we have
most reason to expect God's Pre-
sence and Blessing, when we are wait-
ing upon him in his own Ways; it
having pleas'd God by the Foolishness ^{1 Cor. i. 21.}
of Preaching to save them that be-
lieve.

I come next to the

II. Second Head of Objections,
from the *Manner* of Preaching.
And here,

§. 1. An Objection may be rais'd
from the *Plainness* and Simplicity
with which the most serious and
useful Ministers generally preach.
This is an old Objection which the
Apostle *Paul* has taken care to an-
swer in his first Epistle to the *Corin-*
thians, Chap. i. and, whatever the
Expectation of the learned *Greeks*
was, declares, That upon Principle,
and with Design, his Speech and his
Preaching was not with enticing Words ^{1 Cor. ii. 4,5.}
of Man's Wisdom,—That their Faith
should not stand in the Wisdom of
Men.

Tho this might be a sufficient
Answer, yet let me farther observe
to

Serm. IV to you, That where the matter is Great, the best Judges have always allow'd Plainness and Simplicity of Stile to be most becoming. I could easily refer you to Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, if I had a mind to adorn the Margin. Instead of this, I shall transcribe a few Passages from one of the greatest Judges the last Age produc'd, in his Reflections upon Eloquence.

Rapin.

“ True Eloquence, which pro-
“ ceeds only upon Reality, con-
“ sists in representing things as they
“ are. The most natural Turn of
“ Speech is ever the most difficult,
“ but then it is ever what is most
“ agreeable; because this is an Art
“ in which nothing but what is Na-
“ tural can please. And as the tru-
“ est Penetration is to discern things
“ as they are in themselves, so the
“ truest Persuasion is to make them
“ discern'd by others as they ought
“ to be.

“ The most natural Language,
“ such as flows from a bare Desire
“ of being understood, is certainly
“ the truest and the best.”

And let me add, that the Lan-
guage of the Holy Ghost in the
Scripture, as it is the fittest to clothe
our

our Conception of Divine Things, Serm. IV
so has a *Loftiness*, or Sublimity in it, that is not elsewhere to be equal'd.

" No History, says the foremention'd Author, was ever written " with such a mix'd Air of Simpli- " city and Majesty, as that of Mo- " ses: A few words cited from the " Beginning of which, supply'd Lon- " ginus with his noblest Examples " of the Sublime kind, so vastly su- " perior to the greatest Elevation " of human Stile."

And elsewhere,

" It would be in vain to seek this " Pitch of Eloquence in Aristotle's " Rhetorick, in the Ideas of Her- " mogenes, or the Institutions of " Quintilian."

I shall transcribe but one Passage more; " 'Tis hence (*i. e.* from the Holy Scriptures) " He (that is a Preacher) " must take those bright " Ideas, and that true Sublimity, " which compose the Essential Cha- " racter of the Oratory of the " Temple; such as recommended " Apollos to the Approbation of " St. Paul, and to the Honour of " being his Fellow-Labourer, as an

" *Eloquent*

Serm. IV "Eloquent Man, and mighty in the
 ~~~~~ " Scriptures."

Upon the whole matter, that which is made an Objection against the ordinary manner of Preaching, is, I think, really a Commendation of it ; whereas a nice \* Care of Words, and Affectation of † Flourishes, would betray either Vanity or Insincerity, to the vast Prejudice of the great Design which every faithful Minister has in view.

§. 2. A farther Objection may be rais'd against the *Homeliness* and Coarseness of Stile and Expression, which is found in some Preachers. Plainness and Simplicity may be commendable ; but such a Homeliness and *Bluntness* may justly nauseate and offend People, who have any Niceness of Taste or Politer Relish. To this I answer,

i. I will not undertake to *justify* any thing of this kind, and heartily wish that no Occasion had ever been minister'd to such an Objection. I am sensible there is a Medium be-

\* Cura Verborum derogat affectibus fidem, & ubi cunctis ars ostentatur Veritas abesse videtur. *Quintil.*

† Contextus virilis sit nec circa Flosculos occupatus. *Seneca.*

tween the Gay and the Plain; and Serm. IV there is no manner of reason that while we avoid being vain, we should be offensive. <sup>to And yet,</sup>

2. There may be too great a Niceness express'd upon this Occasion: And tho I don't care to enter into Particulars, <sup>w</sup> h must observe that some of these delicate People that are so offended at what they call low Expressions, and homely Comparisons, have betray'd their Ignorance in censuring some things that are not only drawn from the Fountain of the Politeness of the Eastern Countries, but are consecrated by the Authority of our Saviour and his Apostles: And of this I could give Instances. <sup>But, as below etc</sup>

3. Something of this nature that can't be justifyd, may yet, I hope, be pardon'd. Sometimes the Circumstances of the Audience may excuse it; and that may be very proper, at least tolerable, before a plain Country People, which would not pass in a more Learned or Polite Assembly.

And after all, I say, an Error of this sort is pardonable. You would

K excuse

Serm. IV excuse it in a \* Physician, a Lawyer, or a Friend: If Business of Importance be well done, an improper Turn of Speech ought, in all reason, to be forgiven; and I think much more in the present Case.

I might add, that we find something of this nature in the Performances of the most finish'd Writers (and particularly † in *Homer*) whom no Man never yet ventur'd to slight, but at the expence of his own Reputation. But I shall not enter into such Matters here.

§. 3. It may farther be objected under the same Head, That Reading the Word and good Discourses at Home may as well, or better, answer the End, and so supersede the Necessity of that Hearing which we plead for.

To this I answer, Reading and Hearing are both Duties; and it is no sufficient Objection against one Ordinance, that we attend upon an-

\* *Aeger non querit medicum eloquentem sed suanatem.* *Seneca.*

† *Aliquando bonus dormitat.* *Horat.*

other. They may both consist together, and there is no manner of occasion for them to interfere. Each has its proper Benefit, and we cannot expect a Blessing upon one in neglect of the other. Hearing the Word preach'd, has been sufficiently prov'd to be of Divine Appointment; and to object against it from *Equivalents* and *Expedients*, is certainly to call the great Lawgiver's Wisdom or Authority in question. Let me also add, That if People love the Word of God, they will be glad of all Opportunities of being farther acquainted with it: and it's to be fear'd that such as would be excus'd from Hearing, are not very diligent in Reading. I'll only add, Reading while the Word is preaching, is very improper and injurious to the Attention and Regard requir'd.

III. I come to the Objections, from the *Persons* of such as we represent it your Duty to hear.

1. Some may be weak enough to object against *Parentage* and outward *Circumstances* of the Preacher. Indeed I should not have taken notice

Serm. IV of such an Exception, if I had not  
remember'd that it was made against St. Paul, yea, against the Son  
of God himself; *Is not this the Carpenter's Son?* But with what ap-  
pearance of Reason can this be al-  
leg'd by any Man that considers  
we spring all from one Original and  
Root? We are all the *Offspring* of  
God; and he has made of one Blood  
*all Nations of the Earth.* Our Ge-  
nealogy begins from *Adam*, and we  
can all of us reckon it down for  
1600 Years to *Noah*, our second  
Common Father. It may be also  
consider'd, that *Capacity* of Mind,  
*Strength* of *Judgment*, *Liveliness*  
*of Imagination*, with other natural  
Qualifications, are by no means  
confin'd to what we call good Fa-  
milies. Therefore, tho' I allow it  
a Happiness to be well born, espe-  
cially to have the Education of a  
Gentleman, \* and that these are  
Embellishments which a Minister  
may manage to very good Pur-  
poses; yet sure they are not so nec-  
essary, that good *Sense*, *Learning*, *Di-  
ligence*, and *Integrity* are insufficient  
without them.

\* Mr. Hen-  
ry's Life,  
p. 5.

I am sure our Saviour did not Serm. IV  
chuse his Apostles upon this Plan ;  
and they that were to sit upon  
twelve Thrones, judging the twelve  
Tribes of *Israel*, were far from ma-  
king a Figure as to these outward  
things ; and with so much the more  
Reason, as our Lord had chosen the  
*Poor of this World, rich in Faith : not*  
*many Mighty, not many Noble were*  
*call'd, &c.*

I might add, That some of the  
greatest Heroes of Antiquity were  
as liable to the Force of this Objec-  
tion ; and particularly that *Socrates*,  
*Virgil, Cicero*, and a great many  
more were the first of their Family's,  
that made any Figure in the World.

§. 2. It may be objected, that  
many of the Ministers of the Gos-  
pel are but of mean *Parts* and in-  
different Furniture.

I answer : In all Professions there  
are *Degrees*, every one is not of the  
first Rate, and there may be a Com-  
petency of *Qualification*, where  
there is not every thing one would  
wish to make a Man accomplish'd.  
Without some measure of Fitness  
for the Work, no Man can be a Mi-  
nister ; and yet God has often us'd

Serm. IV the Foolish things of the World to confound the Wise, and the Weak things of the World to confound the things which are Mighty, and Base things of the World, and things which are despis'd —— yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no Flesh should glory in his Presence. Where God is pleas'd to count Men Faithful, putting them into the Ministry, and crown their Endeavours with Success; it ought to be no Objection, that they are not perfectly accomplish'd. And a serious Mind will be ready to reflect how this Circumstance does most effectually secure all the Glory to God, and do honour to that Grace of his, by which we are what we are. But,

§. 3. The severest Objection of all is against the *Moral Defects* of such as preach the Gospel; and here our Enemies expatiate, and give us large Measure. I shall not need to put the Objection in form. It's a Common-Place, and every little Wit is Master of it. I shall answer it under the following Particulars.

i. We do not pretend to *justify* the Misdeanourances of those who preach the

the Holy Gospel. We heartily lament the Occasion given to such Objections, by the scandalous Practices of such as should make all their Faculties bear to the great End of their hallow'd Profession; and in all things shew themselves a Pattern of good Works.

However,

2. You ought in all reason to make us the common Allowances due to the Frailty of human Nature. We are Flesh and Blood, and subject to like Passions as you are. Yea, we are upon many accounts more expos'd than ordinary Christians. The Devil and his malignant Agents are peculiarly industrious to ensnare us, and most gladly triumph in our Fall. People that bear us no ill Will take particular notice of our Failings, and our very Friends are apt to aggravate our Errors, and expose our Conduct under the Influence of our common Adversary; upon which account we deserve some Pity as well as Censure. You have your Faults as well as we, and yet would count it hard not to be own'd as Christians, because of your bewail'd and acknowledg'd Errors. Besides,

Jam. v. 17.

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3. If Ministers are grossly *Scandalous* in their Lives, and incorrigible under proper Methods, we do not plead that you should hear them (especially when you have Plenty of Teachers, and may attend on such as you can't reproach.) And we always profess that scandalous Ministers ought to be discountenanc'd effectually by those with whom God has lodg'd a Power to that purpose, whether it be the Civil Magistrate, Pastors of Churches, or the Community of the Faithful; all of which seem to have a regular Concern in this matter.

4. However, can this be an Objection against Hearing the Word, that *some* Preachers are Vicious? Were they all so, like the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, who said and did not, it does not appear that you would be excus'd from paying this Homage to God. But since Christ's Care of his Church has secur'd a competent Number of *burning and shining Lights*, as well as a great many that are in the main of their Lives blameless and inoffensive, what can such arguing avail? An unhappy few are scandalous, therefore you will hear

none! All have their Faults, and Serm. IV therefore you will reject the Message that God sends you by them. You would, it seems, have the Gospel as well as Law by the Disposition A&T. vii. 53. of Angels, and not receive the Treasure in Earthen Vessels. Let me tell you, God has consulted your own Advantage, in speaking to you by Men like your selves. We know your Frame, your natural and corrupt Passions and Inclinations, by our own Experience; as Face answers to Face in a Glass, so does one Man's Heart to another. We know what 'tis to be tempted, press'd, and hurry'd by the World, Flesh, and Devil; and so can heartily pity you; and are the better qualify'd to bear with you, and serve you. In this we have the advantage of Angels, who might indeed pity, but cannot sympathize, having no acquaintance, by their own Experience, of what we feel. And that this way of arguing may have the more Force, consider what the Apostle says of our Blessed Lord, Heb. ii. 17, 18. Wherefore in all things it behov'd him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful

Serm. IV and faithful High-Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the Sins of the People. For in that he himself hath suffer'd being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. However just you may think this Representation, I must be allow'd to say, that I can see no Force in such a way of arguing as this: Some Ministers are scandalous, all imperfect, therefore we'll hear none of 'em; that is to say, The great God and my Saviour Jesus Christ send me a Message of infinite Concern, but I won't receive it because the Messenger is but a Man. Would it bear you out in refusing a Royal Proclamation, because you had it sent by one whose Loyalty you were not assur'd of? In short, Objections at this rate are impeaching the Wisdom of God; and I have reason to presume, if he were to gratify you in your Demands, and send perfect Men to preach to you, there would not even then be an end of your objecting: for our Lord has told us, that if Men hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, tho' one rose from the Dead, Luke xvi. 31.

§. 4. The last Objection from the Serm. IV  
Persons preaching, which I shall take notice of, is taken from their want of Authority. It may be urg'd, that God has not sent us, and therefore we cannot demand to be heard. To this I answer :

1. It is agreeable to the Light of Nature and common Reason, that some People should be appointed to instruct, Rebuke, Exhort, and Caution others, whose Circumstances require it. And if the Scriptures were wholly silent in this matter, I am apt to think, Magistrates might injoin People to assemble and attend such Preachers as should be qualify'd and directed to undertake so necessary a Work. But,

2. It is very plain, that as there was a standing Ministry appointed for the Service of the Jewish Church, so there is a distinct Order of Men appointed in the Gospel, to minister in holy Things to the end of the World. You have their proper Qualifications describ'd, their Separation to the Work requir'd, the several Parts of it represented and urg'd, Assistance and Success promis'd, the People commanded to submit to them, honour

Serm. IV honour and maintain them, &c. But  
of this I am not now to discourse  
particularly. The Subject has been  
lately canvas'd; and in opposition  
to the most popular Book of the  
kind, so much has been said in de-  
fence of a Gospel-Ministry, as may  
well give an honest Mind full sa-  
tisfaction.

3. But that which we are parti-  
cularly concern'd to obviate, is,  
that tho' there be a Gospel-Ministry  
fix'd by Christ, we have neither  
*Part nor Lot in this matter.* There  
is an *Establish'd Ministry*, and we  
are only *Intruders*, and bear a Cha-  
racter, which obliges People to turn  
away from us, rather than follow  
us. I must therefore offer it to be  
consider'd, Whether we have not  
equal Pretensions by the *Gospel-Rule*,  
to the Ministerial Office, with any  
others. And we have often pro-  
fess'd, that we are not afraid to  
stand the Test of any sober and im-  
partial Enquiry at that Bar. As to  
our *Qualifications*, we pretend to  
have our share, and suppose that  
will not be call'd in question; and  
if we have wanted some Advan-  
tages in our Education, that's a

Hard-

Hardship we justly complain of, Setm. IV. and ought not to be objected by those who have endeavour'd to shut up the Fountains of Learning, tho' they have not taken from us the Key of Knowledge. As to our Faithfulness in the several parts of our Work, the Assistance we receive from God, and the Success of our Labours; nothing can be objected to us, but what must also fill our Adversaries Faces with Shame, and Hearts with Grief: Serious People in the Establishment, as well as out of it, will mix their Tears upon this Occasion: All the business is, that we are not regularly separated to the Work. To this I answer; We take our Ordination to be perfectly agreeable to the Scripture-Canons, and know of nothing omitted by us, that Christ and his Apostles have directed in that matter \*. And if we reject any thing that is merely human, we think ourselves not only justifiable, in asserting that Liberty wherewith Christ

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\* See Mr. James Owen's Plea for Scripture-Ordination, and Dr. Calamy's first Part of his Defence.

Sermon IV. has made us free; but that 'tis to  
our honour to appear for the Pre-  
rogative of our blessed Lord, which  
seems to us invaded by those who  
make Laws and Canons, which he  
has given no Commission for.

IV. The last Head of Objections  
may be taken from the *Persons*  
*Hearing.* And,

§. I. Perhaps some may fancy  
themselves *above it.* I do not mean  
here in reference to Knowldg, for  
that I have consider'd before under  
the first General. But as to their  
*Age, Quality, Power,* and such like  
Circumstances of worldly Precedence  
and Superiority; to this I shall  
answer briefly: That we do in-  
deed owe a particular Respect to  
the *hoary Head.* We are to rever-  
ence those whom God has in his  
Providence exalted above the com-  
mon sort of People, especially those  
whom he has invested with *Autho-*  
*rity;* that they are to be address'd  
with peculiar Respect, and treated  
with a Distinction due to their Cir-  
cumstances: And yet even these are  
as much *oblig'd* to hear the Word, as  
the most distant Inferiors. God  
has

has not appointed a particular Method for the Salvation of the Superior part of Mankind ; even Princes must be sav'd like other Men, and therefore are oblig'd to attend the ordinary Means. And it is fit such Persons should consider, that we are Ambassadors for Christ, and expect regard, not for our own sakes, but for our Master's ; who is infinitely more above the Highest of them, than they are above the Meanest of us. Let such consider what our Lord said concerning a few poor illiterate Mechanicks, whom he had qualify'd for his Work, and honour'd with his Commission : *He that despiseth you, despiseth me.* Sirs, whatever Blood runs in your Veins, it's all tainted by the Treason of your first Parents : And whatever distinction Providence has made in your Favour, you are all by Nature *Children of Wrath*, even as others. And you may please to consider, that when the great Day of God's Wrath is come, there will be Kings of the Earth, and rich Men, and great Men, and chief Captains, and mighty Men, as well as Bond-men, that will cry to be hid from the Wrath of

Rev. vi. 15.

Setm. IV of the Lamb, &c. And as for the distinction of Age, remember, the Sinner of an hundred Years old is accursed, and must be born again tho old, and become as a little Child, if he would enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ; and that the Word of God is the appointed Means of your being begotten again to a lively Hope, even that Word which liveth and abideth for ever. In short, you may as well despise that natural Bread which is the common Staff of Life, as think your selves above those Ordinances which are to quicken you, and nourish you up to Life Eternal.

And to add no more, let me observe to you, that to despise the Word of God, is an aggravated Fault in such as he has set at the head of Mankind ; for as they expect to be heard and obey'd by their Inferiors, they are peculiarly oblig'd to regard Him who is higher than the Highest : And in doing otherwise, they are guilty of that Rebellion against God, which Samuel told King Saul, is as Witchcraft. And truly they must be under an odd sort of Fascination and Inchant-

Inchantment, who expect Men should Serm. IV  
obey God, in submitting to their Word, in which Solomon says there  
is Power; while they make nothing  
of neglecting His, from whom they  
receive the Power they have, and  
who can mingle their Dust when  
he pleases, with that of their com-  
mon Subjects, and imprison their  
Souls in the general Receptacle of  
such as are found rebelling against  
his Word.

S. 2. Some may think themselves  
below the Duty, and imagine, that  
God does not expect them to be  
concern'd about Matters of Reli-  
gion; considering their being oblig'd  
to spend most of their Time in  
providing Necessaries for the Body,  
and subsisting their Families.

But this Objection needs little to  
be said in answer to it. You have  
*Souls* to save, the meanest of you;  
and all Souls must be sav'd in the  
same way. And tho' it be true,  
God does not expect so much of  
your Time to be spent in the Exer-  
cises of his Worship, as if your  
Circumstances were full and easy;  
yet the total Neglect cannot be  
justify'd. And consider, that a se-  
venth

Serm.IV venth part of Time is his, appropriated to himself for our Benefit; and therefore you cannot say you want time. Tho you cannot attend on Week-days, yet you may, and must on Lord's-days, hear the Word preach'd ; that tho you are poor in this World, you may be rich in Faith ; and may lay up to yourselves Treasures in Heaven. And surely they that have little or nothing in this World, had not need despise the Glories of a better, That Life and Immortality which is brought to Light in the Gospel.

S. 3. Others may pretend to excuse themselves from hearing the Word preach'd, under a pretence of expecting the immediate Teachings of the Spirit.

But to such I answer :

1. Immediate Teachings of the Spirit are extraordinary Vouchsafe-ments ; and it seems great Presump-tion for ordinary Persons to expect them, under common Circumstan-ces. Nor do I find any Promise in the Word of God that encourages such an expectation, unless People believe that all the Promises of mi-raculous Gifts which were made to the

the Apostles and Primitive Christians, are in force with reference to us; because it is said, *Mark xvi.*  
17. *These Signs shall follow them that believe: in my Name shall they cast out Devils, &c.* which I see no reason for.

2. However, it cannot be imagin'd that Immediate and Extraordinary Teachings should be bestow'd upon them that *despise* the Ordinary and Mediate. And this I may venture to affirm, That we have no Instance in the Bible, of any one's enjoying these sort of Teachings, in contempt of common Ordinances. Nor do we find that the Apostles and Primitive Christians themselves neglected what was Ordinary, tho' they undoubtedly had what was Extraordinary.

§. 4. Some honest well-meaning People may also object, That they have found no *Benefit* by Hearing the Word, after a long Attendance; and therefore question whether they are still oblig'd to wait upon an Ordinance that has answer'd no end, but increasing their Guilt, and aggravating their Distress. To this I answer;

i. You

Serm. IV. 1. You may be *mistaken* in your Account, and may have receiv'd more Benefit by it than you are aware of. Consider and reflect, and don't let your present Agony make you forget what Effect the Word preach'd has formerly had upon you. Was it not once a means of making you seriously to attend the Concerns of your Souls? Have you not been prick'd at the Heart, and made oftentimes to cry out, *What shall I do?* Have you not sometimes been fill'd with Joy in believing, and tasted that the Lord is gracious? At least, have you not frequently been convinc'd of unknown or unmind'd Duty, engag'd to consider your Ways, and turn your Feet unto God's Testimonies? Have you never been check'd in a sinful Design, or excited to a good one; put into a Method to baffle a Temptation, escape a Snare, or subdue a Lust? Can't you remember when you have been ready to say within your selves, upon hearing a suitable Discourse, *Blessed be the Lord, Blessed be thy Advice, and blessed be thou?* Don't let former Experiences

<sup>1</sup> Sam. xxv.  
32, 33.

periences be forgotten in your present Hurry.

2. If you really have not profited by a long Attendance upon the Word preach'd, it is your great Fault, and ought deeply to be lamented: 'Tis owing to some Neglect in your Attendance and Care, or the Prevalence of some or other Corruption. But this is no Reason for your discontinuing the Discharge of a plain Duty: It should rather put you upon doubling your Diligence, that you may not receive the Grace of God in vain; and make you with greater earnestness, pray to God for the Assistance of his Spirit, that so the Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, and hath appeared Tit. ii. 13. to all Men, may effectually teach you, that denying Ungodliness, and all worldly Lusts, you may live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present World. And,

3. You have no Reason to fear, but in the constant and diligent use of proper Means, God will bless you, and make his Word infinitely beneficial to you. You must wait, and in due time he will remember you; for

Serm.IV for blessed are all they that wait for him. Consider the vast Consequence of the Matter, and how patient you are in Cases where the Concern is less, as well as the Certainty of the Success. How long did the impotent Man lie at the Pool? And how many Years was she exercis'd, that had spent all her Living upon Physicians? The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and you may, after long Patience, be surpriz'd with Mercy; and, or ever you are aware, your Souls may be as the Chariots of Aminadab.

Thus have I endeavour'd to answer such Objections as seem likely to be urged against the Duty of Hearing the Word. There are others which have a sway upon the Minds of the Generality, but will not be own'd; such as *Pride*, *Sensuality*, and *Covetousness*. These 'tis only the Grace of God can effectually answer; and all we can do is to beseech you, and pray to God, that this great *Salvation* may not be neglected; but that your Hearts may be inclin'd to mind the things that belong to your *Peace*, before they be bid

bid from your Eyes : That you may Serm. IV  
not at last, when it will be in vain, ~~~~~  
lament, and say, How have I hated Prov. v. 12,  
Instruction, and my Heart despised Re- <sup>13.</sup>  
proof ! And have not obey'd the Voice  
of my Teachers, nor inclin'd my Heart  
to them that instructed me.

THE WORD OF GOD

.81. H. V. 2011

SER.

DIRECTIONS  
FOR

*Hearing the Word.*

Harri, M. A. 1675. & 1740.

SERMON V.

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LUKE VIII. 18.

*Take heed therefore how you hear.*

**T**H E Words are a general Direction for Hearing the Word, deliver'd by our Lord Himself, and recorded by two several Evangelists. The Form of the Expression evidently imports two things, viz. That there is something to be avoided and guarded against, and something to be at-

tended to, and regarded by us in Serm.V. this matter. And accordingly the Directions which are founded upon them, must be of two general sorts.

- I. Negative Directions, in the nature of *Cautions*.
- II. Positive Directions, or proper Rules for Hearing the Word.

The Consideration of these two will be the business of this Discourse.

I. Negative Directions, in the nature of *Cautions*; or, what we are to avoid and guard against. I shall point out the more common and dangerous Evils in the following Particulars.

§. 1. Beware of *Ignorance*. Many who attend the Preaching of the Word several Years together, remain ignorant of the Principles of Religion, and unacquainted with the weightiest Truths they have often heard. The plainest and closest Discourses on the great things of God's Law, are like a *Tale that is told*, which is presently forgot; or Speech into the Air, which is dispers'd

L and

Serm. V. and lost. They hear the Word from time to time, but are never the wiser for it; and ever learning, but never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth. These are represented by those on the Way-side, who hear the Word, and understand it not.

*2 Tim. iii. 7.*  
*Mat. xiii. 19.*

I am ready to acknowledg, that Education and Capacity make a very great difference between one and another. Some Persons of quicker Apprehensions and more improv'd Minds, can take in that with Ease, which another cannot do with a great deal of Labour. But certainly an ordinary Understanding, and a very mean Capacity, is sufficient to apprehend the plain Truth of Religion, often repeated and much insisted on. And indeed this is almost the only case in which Men are willing to own such a Plea as this. You can easily understand us in other Matters, and when we speak to you of *Earthly Things*; why can't you understand us when we speak of *Heavenly*? If we could instruct you in the Mysteries of Trade, and the Art of Thriving and growing Rich, you would presently understand us, or make a hard Shift

to find it out ; and why then can't Serm.V.  
you understand us when we tell you  
*Words whereby you may be sav'd, and*  
*instruct you in the way to eternal*  
*Life ?*

This plainly shows, that 'tis not want of natural Capacity, but want of Inclination and due Attendance. When the *Light shines in Darkness,* and the *Darkness comprehends it not*; so that we need only open our Eyes to take in the Light which shines about us: 'tis a sign that we *love Darkness rather than Light*; that we chuse it, and are contented with it. And affected Ignorance under the *Light of the Gospel*, is as damning as gross Wickedness. The darkness of Sinners Minds prepares the way for *Outer-darkness*; 'tis a dark Passage to the *Blackness of Darkness* for ever. So the Scripture every where represents it: 'Tis a People of no Understanding: Wherefore he that made them, will not have Mercy on them; he that form'd them, will show them no favour. The People perish for lack of Knowledge. The Lord Jesus will be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flames of Fire, taking Vengeance on

Isa. xxvii.

Hosea iv. 6.

2 Thess. i. 8.

Serm. V. them who know not God, as well as obey  
 ~~~~~ not the Gospel.

§. 2. Be not sleepy Hearers. Indeed they cannot properly be call'd Hearers at all; for they hear not what is spoken, 'tis all one as if it were a silent Assembly, and nothing were said in the Worship of God.

I confess, the weaknes of Nature in some Persons, and especially the Infirmitie's of Age, may render it a considerable difficulty to keep themselves awake, and maintain a due Attention thro the Course of a long Service. Where there is a natural Heaviness, or a contracted Indisposition, which is usual at other times, and difficultly shook off with all our Care; there is great Compassion due to them from others, as 'tis a real Burden and Trouble to themselves. Tho this must not be thought neither to excuse from the utmost Care, as it seldom does from every degree of Blame; because the Worship of God is a greater Matter, and requires greater regard than any other thing. Thus our Lord tells his sleepy Disciples, overcome
Mat. xxvi. with Weariness and Grief; *The Spirit indeed is willing, but the Flesh is weak.*

40.

weak. Which whether you understand as a favourable Construction, and in the nature of an Excuse; or only as a Reason and Motive to greater Care, i. e. Be the more watchful over your selves, because of the heaviness of Nature: it will equally serve the present Purpose; for 'tis not without a tacit Reproof, yea an express Upbraiding them: *What, could you not watch with me one Hour? Sleep on now, and take your Rest.* Ver. 40, 45.

In this case I must bespeak your friendly and faithful Assistance, and desire every Person to be so kind to his Neighbour, if at any time he be overtaken with such a Fault, to restore him in the Spirit of Meekness: Suffer not any Man to sleep within your reach. There is no wise and good Man but will own the Kindness, and take it well at your hand; considering himself, lest he also be tempted. You may easily partake of other Mens sins, if you don't do what you can to prevent it. Sleepy Hearers seldom sin alone, and 'tis dangerous sitting near such Persons, if you have not Kindness and Courage enough to do your Duty: and we

Serm.V. owe no Man so much Tenderness and
~~~~~ Respect, as to suffer him to sin  
without disturbance, and draw us  
into a Partnership of his Guilt.

But now in the Case of others; that is, of young and healthy Persons, of those who are common Sleepers, especially such as lean and loll, as if they meant to compose themselves to Sleep, and design'd to take a Nap; as if Places of Publick Worship were intended rather to refresh the Body than profit the Soul, and they might hope to meet with God, as the Prophets of old, in a Vision or Dream: I think I ought to speak to such with a greater severity, and make them sensible of their Sin.

Is it not then a great Contempt of the Majesty of God, an Indignity to the Presence in which you stand? Would it not be reckon'd an Irreverence to an earthly Prince, for a Man to fall asleep with a Petition in his Hand, or while he expected some special mark of Favour? Is a sleepy Frame suitable to the Solemnity of Worship, and Presence of God, who never slumbers or sleeps? Can we offer ardent Prayers

Prayers to the Majesty of Heaven, Serm.V.  
or receive a Message from his Mouth, drowsy and half asleep ?  
And this is the more criminal where 'tis peculiar to the Worship of God,  
and we can be sufficiently awake and concern'd in other Matters.

Besides, is it not *scandalous* to others, and a just Prejudice to their Minds ? For don't it carry this Appearance and Signification with it, That the Worship of God is a dull and heavy thing, fit only to stupify our Minds and lull us asleep ; or a dead Formality and empty Name, without any Life and Power to make us serious, or so much as keep us awake ? And what a Dishonour and Reproach is this to the Service of God ? What an Offence to holy Angels, who are present in Christian Assemblies, and who themselves burn with Zeal, and are active as *Flames of Fire* ? What Grief to Fellow-Christians, to see your sluggishness and sloth, who are  *fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord* ? What a scandal must it be to Unbelievers, who easily take offence, and interpret every thing to the worst ; to see Men regardless of the God they worship,

Serm.V. and fall asleep under the means of spiritual Life? May I not say in this Case, as the Apostle in another, *What, have ye not Houses to eat and drink in; I add, to sleep in, but you despise the Church of God?* And does not what he says, of the Confusion of strange Tongues, hold equally true of the Dulness and Silence of Sleep? *If all speak with Tongues, and there cometh into your Assembly one Unlearned, or an Unbeliever, will he not say that you are Mad?*

Must it not render the Word useless to your selves, and your spiritual Good? Will the clearest Representation of Divine Truth, or the most lively and moving Arguments, instruct or affect? Must not the best Endeavours be unsuccessful, and all your Attendance without the least Advantage? For 'tis not so much as a sound in the Air to them who sleep, but like speaking to the dead, and prophesying over dry Bones.

Finally, is it not very dangerous? There is a remarkable Instance upon record to this purpose: *There sat in the Window a certain young Man nam'd*

nam'd Eutychus, being fallen into a Serm.V.  
deep sleep; and as Paul was long ~~~~~  
preaching (which therefore doubt- Acts xx. 9..  
less upon proper Occasions is very  
justifiable) he sunk down with sleep,  
and fell down from the third Loft, and  
was taken up dead. And Paul went Ver. 10..  
down and fell on him, and embraced  
him, saying, Trouble not your selves,  
his Life is in him. 'Twas well for  
Eutychus that Paul was present, tho  
he slept with long Attendance, and  
late at Night, or he might have  
gone out of the World asleep, and  
awoke in another World. He  
might have pass'd from sleepy Wor-  
ship to the awful Tribunal above.  
And let any one consider, how un-  
welcome would be the surprize, to  
be found sleeping in the Worship  
of God at the coming of Christ, or  
to be seiz'd with Sickness and Death  
in such a condition as that.

I have spoken the freer to this  
Matter, because 'tis so common a  
Case, and so great an Evil; tho I  
must here do that right to this As-  
sembly, to own, that I don't re-  
member to have once observ'd any  
one sleeping in the time of Wor-  
ship.

Serm.V. §. 3. Be not *careless Hearers.*  
Some gaze and stare about them with an heedless Indifference and **Unconcern**; they seem to affect an Air of Negligence, and think it an impropriety to appear attentive and concernd: They are easily impress'd and diverted by every Object near them, and observe so much the Postures and Fashions of others, as not to mind what is spoken to themselves. And 'twere well if there were no reason to think, that some People go to Church for no higher an end, than to show themselves, and look at others; and talk more afterwards of what they have seen, than of what they have heard. And then 'tis the less wonder, that they who come with so light a Mind, are sometimes led to great Indelicacies, and betray the Vanity of their Minds by an irreverent Behaviour. And some are arriv'd to such a proficiency in Folly, as to find occasions of Laughter in the Worship of God, and can't forbear to proclaim their Folly in the face of the Congregation. These indeed are not wholly idle and unactive, but they are most impertinently busy,

busy, and 'twere better for them to Serm.V.  
be fast asleep.

But is a vain and trifling Mind becoming the weightiest Matter and the greatest Solemnity in all the World ? To be wandering and careless when *Life and Death are set before you*; and the most concerning things are spoken to you in the Name of the Lord ? Do Men do so in lesser Matters, and when they are transacting things of moment to their Business and Estates, or to their Life and Health ? Is this at all suitable to the Presence of a jealous God, who is tender of the Honour of his Worship, and will not hold them guiltless who hear his Word, any more than *take his Name in vain* ? Or consistent with that Reverence and godly Fear with which we are requir'd to serve that God who is a *consuming Fire* ?

Third Com-  
mandment.

Heb. xii.28.

§. 4. Be not *forgetful* Hearers, who retain not what they hear, and never think of it after. As soon as the Sound is out of their Ear, the Sense is out of their Mind ; they don't give so much Attention to be able to remember it afterward. And this I doubt is a common

Serm. V. mon Case, and perhaps with some  
who are not wholly careless. 'Tis  
true, the natural Frailty of Me-  
mory in some, and the Decay of  
Memory in sick and aged Persons,  
is more their Infelicity and Dis-  
advantage, than their Sin; and  
ought rather to quicken their Di-  
ligence and keep them humble,  
than perplex or discourage them.  
But what is this to you, who can  
remember other things well enough?  
Why cannot younger Persons re-  
member, at least, the Heads of a  
Sermon, who can easily remember  
long Stories, and tell them one  
another? Why cannot Servants  
remember a Sermon as well as an  
Errand of Busines, which has many  
Particulars and different Parts?  
Why cannot Men of Busines as  
well remember what they hear, as  
retain a Variety and Crond of  
worldly Affairs in their Mind?  
Surely you might observe, with a  
like Application, the main Scope  
and Drift, the principal Points,  
the general Method, and some par-  
ticular Hints and Remarks.

And can you ever hope, a Word  
entirely forgotten should profit?  
that

that it should reach its End, or be Serm.V.  
of any use without being remem-  
ber'd? The *forgetful Hearer* stands Jam. i. 25.  
oppos'd, in the Apostle, to the  
*Doer of the Word*; and is represen-  
ted by a *Man beholding his natural* ver. 23.  
*Face in a Glass*; *He beholdeth himself*  
*and goeth his way, and straitway for-*  
*getteth what manner of Man he was*;  
i.e. either by a slight and transient  
Glance, without distinct notice; or  
discovering some Blemish, turns a-  
way his Face with Dislike: either  
way it fitly represents the faint Im-  
pression made upon the Mind, and  
the weak Image and Idea it leaves  
behind. But this will return under  
another Head.

§. 5. Be not *worldly-minded* Hear-  
ers; such as the Prophet represents  
the *Jews*, who *sat before the Lord*, as Eze. xxxiii.  
*his People sat* — *but their Hearts went* <sup>31.</sup>  
*after their Covetousness*. They ap-  
pear'd in a Posture of Worship, and  
with outward Marks of Reverence;  
but their Minds were turn'd ano-  
ther way, and engag'd on other  
things. They are filled with earth-  
ly Cares, while they are hearing the  
Words of Eternal Life. Their  
Hearts start aside like a *deceitful*  
*Bow,*

Serm. V. *Bow*, when they would hold them  
bent to so disagreeable a Work,  
and run out upon the World, which  
is the Idol of their Souls. They  
please themselves not only with the  
real Enjoyments, but imaginary  
Scenes of things; with the hopeful  
Projects they have laid, and great  
Designs in view. They have many  
Cares and Contrivances to secure  
their Possessions, and increase their  
Store. They *compass Sea and Land*  
to thrive and grow rich, as the Jews  
did to make a Proselyte; and seem to  
have no higher Ambition than to  
*Psal. xl ix.* do well for themselves, and leave the  
rest of their Substance to their Chil-  
dren; to bless themselves while they  
live, and that Posterity should approve  
their Saying.

Their Minds are deeply tinctur'd  
with the World; and constant Con-  
verse with the Earth, derives an  
Earthliness into their Hearts.—The  
World sticks close to them, and  
they cannot easily shake it off. These  
Thoughts hang about them where-  
ever they go, and flow freely in the  
Channel which is worn out for  
them by long Use. And to turn  
them another way, is like stemming  
the

the Tide, or turning the Stream ; Sermon V.  
which will make great Resistance,  
and soon return when the Force is  
remov'd. So we find, *He who re-*  
*ceiveth Seed among Thorns, is he who Mat. xiii. 22.*  
*heard the Word ; and the Cares of the*  
*World, and the Deceitfulness of Riches*  
*choke the Word ; and it becometh un-*  
*fruitful. A Multiplicity of Cares*  
*distract their Thoughts, and indis-*  
*pose the Mind for due Attendance*  
*to the Word of God. Instead of*  
*sitting at Jesus Feet and hearing his Luk. x. 39,*  
*Word, they are careful, and troubled <sup>41.</sup>*  
*about many things ; while they are*  
*over-careful in other things, they*  
*are wholly careless of this.*

But is there not a *Season* for every  
thing, and *every thing* beautiful in its  
*Season*? Are not six Days of the  
Week sufficient to serve your selves,  
and attend the World ; and one  
Day little enough to serve the Lord ?  
Can't you give all due and reason-  
able Attendance to your Callings  
and Affairs at proper Times, but  
you must rob God of his Day, or  
profane any Sacred Time with com-  
mon Use? Must it not argue strange  
Inordinacy of Affection, and the  
Power of the *Spirit of this World*,  
that

Serm.V. that you cannot wait upon the Lord without *Distraction*? Is it not gross Hypocrisy to be present in *Body*, but absent in *Spirit*; to have the Heart roving abroad, and running upon the *Ends of the Earth*, while your Bodies bow before him and appear to worship him? Yea, is not this the way to cross your own Designs, and bring a Curse, instead of a Blessing, upon what you enjoy; at least the Curse of a *Portion in this World*, and having your Reward here?

And 'twere well if those of better Opportunities for free Attendance on the Word, did not entangle themselves with the Affairs of Life, and clog and disturb their Minds with what should help and encourage them in the Service of God.

§. 6. Be not *unbelieving Hearers*, who receive not the *Truth in the Love of it*, or embrace it in their Hearts. They may attend to it with Care, and understand it very well, but entertain it not with due regard, i. e. suffer the Evidence of Truth to have its proper Weight, or the Influence of it to prevail. They hear it as the *Word of Man*, but not

as

as the *Word of God*; with Civility Serm.V.  
and Respect, but not with Reve-  
rence or Subjection of Heart. So  
it was at first: Many did not believe  
the Word in the Mouth of Christ  
himself; for he marvelled at their  
Unbelief. And some believ'd the things <sup>A&.xxviii.</sup>  
which were spoken by Paul, and some <sup>24.</sup>  
believ'd not. And so it is still:  
There are many Unbelievers among  
the Hearers of the Word; I mean  
not so much speculative Infidels who  
don't own the Revelation of the  
Gospel, as practical Infidels under  
a Profession of the Gospel; who are  
not thorowly convinc'd in their  
Minds, or brought to the *Obedience*  
of *Faith*, to a hearty Compliance <sup>Rom. xvi.</sup>  
and Subjection to the Truth they  
own: Yea, who \*imprison the Truth\* <sup>Ch. i. 18.</sup>  
in *Unrighteousness*; keep that under <sup>καλέσθεντος</sup>  
Restraint, which would make them <sup>ταύτην</sup>  
free, and hinder its proper and  
kindly Effect.

Whereas now Unbelief is the  
great Sin under the Gospel, as 'tis  
a Sin against the only Remedy, and  
the best means of Relief. And tho'  
our Unbelief can't make the *Faith*  
of God of no effect to others, yet it  
will render the *Word of God* of no  
effect

Serm.V. effect to our selves. 'Twill make all the Means not only vain but hurtful, and turn the Word of Life into a *Savour of Death*. 'Twill highly aggravate the Guilt of our Disobedience, and expose to a *sorer Punishment*: For it binds down upon Us the Curse of the Law, under which we lie, and brings upon Us the Condemnation of the Gospel, by which only we could find Relief.

*S. 7.* Be not formal and customary Hearers, who attend the Preaching of the Word upon no higher a Principle, or better a Design, than Education and Fashion; because they have been us'd to do so, and others do so about them. They tread a beaten Path, and keep up the Custom of the World, having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power of it.

*2 Tim. iii. 5.* But will a Round of outward Duty avail to spiritual Life, or tend to real Improvement? Can we expect a vital Power should accompany an empty Form, or to find substantial Good from a mere Shadow and Appearance? An artful Image of a living Creature may appear beautiful and regular, and have all

the

the Features and Proportions ; but Serm.V. then 'tis without any living Sense, and remains always at a dead stand. We may attend all our days in this manner, and be never the better for it. Many Years Enjoyment of the best Means will make no increase of saving Wisdom, or add any thing to our Attainments in Grace. Indeed such Men only *cumber the Ground* ; are useless Burdens in the Vineyard, and only take up the Place of more fruitful Trees. They are in danger of the Curse of Barrenness ; *never Fruit grow on thee more* : or of being immediately cut down and cast into the Fire.

And indeed at this rate we should be of any other Religion or Persuasion, if we had happen'd to be born in another Place, or fall into other hands. If our Lot had been cast in a foreign Country, we must upon this Principle, have been Pagans or Papists, or of any of the different Sects of the Professors of Christianity or the Reform'd Religion : and must as often shift and change our Religion, and Way of Worship, as we move our Abodes, or alter our Acquaintance. And how extremely

Serm.V. tremely absurd that is, I think I  
 need not spend time to shew.

Mat.xiii.21. §. 8. Be not temporary Hearers,

like him who receiv'd the Seed in stony Places: He hears the Word, and with Joy receives it; but not having Root in himself, dureth but a while, and when Tribulation or Persecution ariseth, by and by he is offended.

They are earnest and zealous, but not according to Knowledge, and but for a while. They single out Mens different Talents, and set them up in opposition to one another. They admire one Man's Wit and Eloquence, another's Fervour and Zeal, and the Judgment and Exactness of a third. So we find in the Apostles

<sup>1 Cor. i. 12.</sup> Days, One was for Paul, another for Apollos, another for Cephas. They esteem'd Paul's Judgment, Apollos's Eloquence, and Peter's Zeal. They

<sup>Jude 16.</sup> have Mens Persons in Admiration more than the Doctrine they deliver; and

<sup>Ch. iv. 6.</sup> are puffed up for one against another, i. e. magnify one Man's Gifts to the prejudice and disparagement of another; which the Apostle expressly condemns. They have Warmth of Affection and lively

<sup>Mar. vi. 20.</sup> Workings of Soul. They hear the Word

Word gladly, as Herod did John the Serm.V.  
Baptist; and with the Jews are willing   
to rejoice for a Season in his Light. Joh. v. 35.  
They tremble at the Word, as Felix  
did when Paul reason'd of Righteous-  
ness, Temperance, and Judgment to  
come; which were very awakening  
and touching Subjects: but then  
they have not Root in themselves. The  
Seed of the Word has not taken  
root in their Hearts, or full posse-  
sion of their Souls; and they quick-  
ly cool and flag, gradually decline  
in their Affection and Zeal, and  
grow at length into Weariness and  
Dislike of what they had chosen and  
admir'd.

And especially in Cases of Diffi-  
culty and Suffering, when Tribula-  
tion and Persecution arise; they are  
presently offended, they drop like  
Leaves in Autumn, or rotten Fruit  
in a shaking Wind. They are bla-  
sted or blown off with every unkind-  
ly Breath of Air. When once it  
comes to a close Trial of Sincerity;  
to forsake the World, and hazard  
their Lives; they desert their Pro-  
fession, and either return to their  
former vain Conversation, or take up  
with some more safe and secure Pro-  
fession

Serm.V. fession in the World. And trying  
 Times are wont to make strange  
 Discoveries, and carry off many  
 who made as high Pretensions and  
 fair Appearance as any.

I think I need say no more to this,  
 than that the saving Benefit of  
 Hearing the Word, as of other  
 Duties, wholly depends upon this  
 Supposition, That we are sincere in  
 what we do, and persevere to the  
 End. As good never have heard  
 the Word, and made a Profession,  
 as not be faithful to the Death. Yea,

Heb.vi. 5,6. 'twere better never to have been en-  
 lighton'd and taste the good Word of  
 God, than afterwards to fall away;

2 Pet. ii. 20, and better not to have known the Way  
21. of Righteousness, than after they have  
 known it, to turn from the Holy Com-  
 mandment.

§. 9. Be not proud *Pharisaical*  
 Hearers, who satisfy themselves  
 with being *Hearers only*, resting in  
 External Duty, and looking no farther  
 for Acceptance. Usually such  
 Men are very punctual and exact,  
 very frequent and abundant in Ex-  
 ternal Attendance, and the Rites of  
 Worship. They keep up to the  
 Height and Rigour of the Rule, it  
 may

may be go beyond it in voluntary Serm.V.  
Worship, and uncommanded Strict-  
ness ; as the *Pharisees* enlarg'd their  
*Phylacteries*, and tithed *Mint* and *An-*  
*ise* and *Cummin*. But then they  
glory and pride themselves in their  
Duties, reckon themselves distin-  
guish'd from other Men, and en-  
titled to Divine Favour ; tho' they  
indulge to secret Sins, and dispense  
with open Wickedness. They cover  
the Hypocrisy of their Heart, and  
the Violence and Oppression of their  
Life, with the specious appearance  
of extraordinary Piety and Zeal.  
God, I thank thee, I am not as other  
Men, nor even as this Publican ; I  
give Alms, and fast twice in the Week.  
They justify themselves and condemn  
others ; and external Duty is to  
supply the place of inward Hol-  
iness, and make Atonement to God  
for real Wickedness.

There is materially, the *Leaven of*  
the *Pharisees* among the Professors  
of the Christian Religion ; and to  
speak freely, I doubt many who run  
after Sermons and Lectures among  
us, and attend the Prayers of the  
Church among others, are not bet-  
ter Christians than others, or much  
the

Serm.V. the better Men. They are *vain in their Imagination*, and tinctur'd with the fond Conceit, that they do enough in Hearing the Word, and attending the Worship of God; and shall be accepted for their often Hearing, and *much Speaking.*

This Pride is rooted in fallen Nature, and there are early Tendencies this way; but 'tis a very dangerous and destructive Evil wherever it prevails. Duty is the Means of Blessing and Way of Acceptance, but must not be made our End, or look'd upon as a Cause. We must not rest in the Work done, but use it in order to something further; as an instrumental Means proper to its End, and powerful by Divine Appointment. We must give all Diligence; but when we have done all those things which are commanded, must say, *We are unprofitable Servants.* We must have no Confidence in the Flesh, and can only hope to be accepted in the Beloved. Mere bodily Labour profiteth little; and without a hearty subjection to the Word we hear, and sincere Faith in the Blood of Christ for Pardon and Acceptance, all the Hearing

Hearing and Professing in the world Serm.V.  
will signify nothing. The reason is, That this is inverting the Nature and Order of things, making that our *End* which was design'd only as a *Means*; and I fear not to say, that taking up with external Duty, and fixing in a false Dependence, prove as certainly destructive, as gross Neglect or directer Wickedness.

§. 10. Be not *curious* and censorious Hearers; who hear Sermons only to exercise their Wit, or show their Spleen; to make Remarks upon the Exactness of the Method, the Closeness of the Reasoning, the Turns of Language, or the Decency and Life of the Delivery. They turn the Church of God into a *Theatre*, and come to hear the Word with a like Temper and Design as they go to see a Play, to please and entertain a vain and curious Mind. They are wanton with their Food, and play with the Worship of God. They are not satisfy'd with sound and wholesom Food, if it be not nice and exact, or there is the least Inaccuracy and Defect; and can allow themselves to trifle and sport

Serm.V. with the Preacher's Imperfections,  
or any Weakness and Disadvantage  
of his Person and Voice. They are  
quick to spy Faults, and ready to  
aggravate the smallest Slip and Mis-  
take, which mere Civility would co-  
ver, and a little Candour excuse.

But where, in the mean time, is a  
Regard to the Divine Appointment,  
or Sense of the Presence of God?  
Where is the Wisdom of trifling  
with sacred Things, or the Wit of  
being profane? Shall it be counted  
reasonable to criticize upon an *All*  
*of Grace*, to which we owe our  
Lives; or turn that into a Trial of  
Skill, which is design'd to *save* our  
Souls? Is it consistent with the  
lowest Pretensions to Sense or De-  
cency, to betray our Vanity or Ill-  
Nature in the most serious Matter  
and greatest Concern?

I have heard of some, who have  
made Sport and Diversion with the  
Preaching of the Word, whom God  
has rebuk'd in the severest manner.  
Particularly of one extraordinary  
Instance in the Memory of some  
living; a Person of Distinction, who  
representing the Sermon he heard  
preach'd in a ludicrous manner,  
among

among his merry Companions, was Serm.V.  
struck ill at that very instant, and ~~~~~  
died within a few days.

Sometimes Persons of *meaner Capacities* and lower Attainments in Religion, are more forward to take offence, and fancy something amiss; than to suspect themselves, or attend to their real Improvement. Instead of being humble Learners of the Doctrine of Christ, and sitting at the Feet of their Teachers and Guides, they set up for Judges, and think themselves qualify'd to pass Sentence. They are not satisfy'd with the Liberty, which we readily allow, of examining the Truth of what they hear; but claim the Privilege of finding Fault, and fixing their Censure upon every thing: tho I must needs say, as far as my Observation has carried me, they oftner betray Ignorance and Conceit, than found Judgment, or a serious Mind.

Having clear'd the way of the principal Prejudices to your profit in Hearing the Word, I proceed,

II. To more positive Directions, or proper Rules for Hearing the Word. And here something will be found necessary before-hand, and in the nature of a Preparation; something will be proper at the Time, and while we are Hearing; something will be requisite after. And the Consideration of these three will take in all that belongs to this matter, and whatsoever is scatter'd up and down in the Scripture in relation to it.

§. I. As to what is necessary before-hand, and in the nature of a Preparation. And here there must be something Fundamental and *Habitual*; something *Actual* and in Exercise.

(1.) There must be something *Habitual* and Fundamental, in order to the right Hearing the Word, and full Advantage by it: for Example,

Luke viii.  
25.

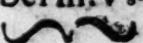
I. There must be an *honest* and *good Heart*. The Word must sink down into the Heart, and not only rise in the Head, or appear in the Tongue. It must possess the whole Soul, and not only rest in the Under-

derstanding and Affection. And it Serm.V.  
must be an *honest* and *good* Heart: the critical distinction between them  
is, That *honest* refers to the inward  
Frame; and *good* to the outward  
Actings and Expressions of the Mind.  
There must be a right *Disposition* of  
Soul to receive the Word, and ren-  
der it effectual: for the Seed of the  
Word is according to the nature  
of the Soil, and there must be *good*  
*Ground* where it *takes Root* and be-  
comes *fruitful*. The true Reason  
of the Inefficacy of the Word, is,  
some how or other, the Indisposi-  
tion of the Subject, and its Unfit-  
ness to receive Benefit by it; as  
appears plainly in the *Parable of the*  
*Sower*.

There must be a real *Willingness* to  
know the Truth, and approve what  
is truly good: a *Faithfulness* to pre-  
sent Light, and *Openness* to fur-  
ther Evidence: An *impartial Plain-  
ness* and *Simplicity* of Mind, which  
may proceed from rational Princi-  
ples, and the power of common  
Grace. And thus much is *ordina-  
rily* necessary to any Impression of  
Good, and to the first saving  
Change; tho God, I own, does

Serm.V. sometimes work upon the Heart in  
a more immediate and instantane-  
ous Manner.

Yea, in order to the full Benefit  
of Hearing, there must be a re-  
newed Heart. We must be taken  
off the stock of Nature, before we  
can receive the *ingrafted Word*; and  
must be born of the *incorruptible  
Seed*, in order to the proper Actions  
of the spiritual Life, or Exercise of  
saving Grace. So the *good Ground*  
stands oppos'd to all the kinds of  
bad, and must reasonably be sup-  
pos'd to take in what was want-  
ing in all the rest; as *considering*,  
*retaining*, and *bringing forth Fruit*.  
There must be a Heart *season'd with  
Grace*, and *sanctify'd by the Spirit  
of God*: A Heart prevailingly *af-  
ter the Heart of God*, who is a God  
of *Truth*; and subject to the Will  
of God, who is supreme Lord:  
Right in its Ends, and real in its  
Appearance: free from Guile and  
Deceit, and without the prevailing  
Mixture of any contrary Principle:  
willing to entertain every Truth of  
God, in proportion to its Evidence,  
and without reserve and dislike:  
dispos'd to receive the suitable Im-  
pression

pression 'tis fit to make; as Wax Serm.V.  
receives the Impression of the Seal;   
or good Soil to sound Seed, which  
is proper to nourish and make it  
fruitful.

2. Sound *Knowledg.* That the  
*Soul be without Knowldg, is not good:* Prov. xix.  
20.  
'Tis like an Eye without light, un-  
capable of Management and Direc-  
tion in the Concerns of Religion,  
or Affairs of Life.

We ought to be well instructed  
in the Principles of Religion, and  
have a regular Scheme of Christian  
Doctrine in our Minds; especially  
of the grand Articles of Faith and  
Duty, in order to the full Benefit of  
this Ordinance: tho I confess we  
must hear the Word to gain neces-  
sary Knowldg, and for the daily  
Improvement of it too. Particu-  
larly, *Catechising* must fit for pub-  
lick Hearing, and the Discipline of  
the Family for the Ordinance of  
the Church. And probably in this  
respect some Women were *Helpers* Phil. iv. 3.  
So Tit. ii. 4.  
with the Apostles, by private cate-  
chising and instructing younger Per-  
sons in the Knowldg of God, as  
well as by personal Attendance and  
Service.

Serm.V. 'Tis certain, the Ignorance and Unskilfulness of many *in the Word of Righteousness*, often render the most familiar and affectionate Preaching of the Word, and much more elaborate and accurate Preaching; wholly fruitless, and without effect. They don't understand the first Elements, or the *Principles of the Doctrine of Christ*, by which they must be guided to understand and judg of all the rest.

<sup>Mark iv.  
14.</sup> 3. A well-chosen *Ministry*. Another Evangelist says, *Take heed what you hear*, i. e. The subject Matter, which at least includes the Persons who speak it. We must be careful to attend a regular Ministry, duly qualify'd and ordain'd to preach; as well as that it be the Truth of God, and the Doctrine of the Gospel, and not another thing. The Apostle severely chides the *Galatians*, for being so soon remov'd from Him, who called them into the *Grace of Christ*, to another *Gospel*. And advises the *Ephesians*, to be no more *Children*, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of *Doctrine*, by the Slight of Men, and cun-

<sup>Gal. i. 6.</sup>

<sup>Eph. iv. 14.</sup>

ning Craftiness, whereby they lie in Serm.V.  
wait to deceive.



I take it here for granted, that Christians have a Right \* to chuse the Ministry under which they stately sit. And tho' few Mens Ministry is such, that a wise and serious Christian can't profit by; and there is always a due regard to be maintain'd to the Office of a regular Ministry; the *Diversity of Gifts* is from the same *Spirit*, and tends to the common *End*: yet doubtless we are concern'd to chuse what we apprehend best, and find most suitable to our selves, according to the best Light and Experience of our Minds, and the Opportunities afforded us. And since I am led to this Matter by the Subject before me, I shall presume, tho' with all Humility, to offer my own Apprehensions in the following *Hints*. And I am under the Correction of my Brethren, if in any thing I mistake.

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\* Blondelli *Apologia pro Sententia Hieronimi de Episcopis & Presbyteris*, Sect. 3. p, 379.

*Dr. Calamy's third Part of the Defence*, p. 154.

Serm.V. I would not sit under an *ignorant*  
 ~~~~~ Ministry, which is unacquainted with  
 the Mystery of Salvation by Christ,
 and the Revelation of the Will of
 God in the Gospel; not capable of
 the *Work of the Ministry*, which is
 Eph. iv.12. the *perfecting of the Saints*, and ed-
 ifying the *Body of Christ*; or able by
 Tit. i. 9. *sound Doctrine, to exhort and convince*
Gain-sayers.

I would not chuse an *ungodly* Mi-
 nistry; who contradict their Doc-
 trine by the Scandal of their Lives,
 and are a Reproach at once to the
 Ministerial Character and Christian
 Name. For I should fear the Suc-
 cess, tho' not the Validity of their
 Administrations; and that they
 would not be so likely to be own'd
 of God, and attended with his Pre-
 sence, upon which the Efficacy of
 the best Endeavours depends.

I would not chuse an *unsound*
 Ministry, which would teach me
 any hurtful Error, or not teach me
 the *Truth as 'tis in Jesus*: which con-
 sents not to *wholesom Words*, or per-
 vert's the Mind with any thing *con-
 trary to sound Doctrine*. For this
 were alike unnatural and perni-
 cious, as to offer *Poison instead of*
Food;

Food ; or to give a Stone, or a Ser- Serm.V.
pent instead of Bread.

I would not chuse an *unprofitable* Ministry, which runs out into airy Notion, or barren Controversy : which only amuses, but don't edify ; and would feed me with Husks and Chaff, instead of solid and substantial Food. The Apostle often cautions against this, under several Terms of great Reproach ; as *vain Fangling, Questions and Strife of Words, foolish and unlearned Questions, profane and vain Babbling* : and says concerning them, That they minister not to godly *Edifying* ; are to no Profit, but the *subverting of the Hearers; increase to more Ungodliness, and gender Strife*.

Epist. to
Timothy.

I would not chuse an *uncharitable* Ministry ; which would fill my Mind with Prejudice against others, and destroy Christian Love ; either by angry and open *Invectives*, the proper Expressions of a bitter and furious Zeal, and Fuel of Rage and Faction among Men ; as if the direct Design of the Gospel were not to send *Peace*, but a *Sword*, and the Ministers of Christ were by their Office rather *Heralds of War*, than

Embassa-

Serm.V. *Embassadors of the Prince of Peace:*
 or by more secret and distant *Insinuations*, reflecting on the Conduct
 of other Men, and challenging the Sincerity of their Hearts; charging
 them with Opinions which they don't own, or Consequences which
 they don't see: Which must needs argue Pride and *Selfishness*, and breed
Jealousy and Distrust among the Professors of Religion; where *For-
 bearing* one another is made so necessary, and sincere and fervent
Love is so distinguishing a Mark and great a Glory. So some, en-
 vious of the Credit and Reputation of the Apostle, spread ground-
 less Reports to his Disadvantage,
Rom. iii. 8.
2 Cor. xii.
17, &c. both of his Doctrine and Conduct, in those very Places in which
 he had labour'd with the greatest success.

I would chuse to sit under a true
1 Cor. ii. 2. *Gospel-Ministry*; who determine to
 know nothing but *Jesus Christ*, and
 him *crucify'd*, i. e. make it their
 Business to preach the Doctrine of
 a *crucify'd Christ*, in opposition to
 every other thing; whether the
Law of Moses, or the *Gentile Philo-
 sophy*. Who shun not to declare the
Acts xx. 27. whole

whole *Counsel of God*, i. e. Preach Serm.V.
the Gospel in its full Extent and true Design; in its proper Order,
and all its Parts. Who magnify
the *Grace of God* in its due Com-
pass and Height, and in its fullest
Consistence with all the Divine Per-
fections. Who exalt the *Redeemer*
in the equal Exercise of all his
Office, and the utmost Display
of his proper Glory. Who press
the Necessity of the *Spirit's Influ-
ence*, and his proper Concern in our
entire Recovery; from the *renew-
ing of the Holy Ghost*, and gradual
Sanctification, to the spotless Per-
fection of Glory: whereas they
who *slight* the Spirit of God, are
visibly slighted by him, and de-
serted of his powerful Presence.
Who preach the *Duties*, as well
as the Privileges of the Gosp.
Covenant, upon a right foot, and
with due reference; to the Autho-
rity of Christ, tho' Aids of his Spi-
rit, and Merit of his Blood.

Who speak the *Words of Truth*
and *Soberness*, with Order and Evi-
dence, and without a wild Confu-
sion or empty Noise; who speak
clear and convincing, to the Under-

Serm.V. derstandings and Consciences of Men, as well as their Affections; without a gaudy Fineness, or dry Exactness: Who are practical and experimental, not vainly nice, or merely notional; wise and skilful, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, and adapting themselves suitably to every one's respective Case; lively and serious, who express a savour of the Knowledg of Christ, and a Zeal for doing Good; diligent and faithful, giving attendance to Reading, and giving themselves wholly

^{2.} Tim. ii. to it; studying to show themselves ^{15.} approved to God, and commanding themselves to every Man's Conscience in the sight of God. In a word; who come nearest the Rule, and act in greatest Dependence upon the Divine Blessing.

And the reason of this is, because a due Esteem and Satisfaction of Mind is very necessary to your spiritual Profit; and Prejudice or Jealousy of the Person or Doctrine you hear, will alienate your Affection, fortify your Minds against the Impression of Truth, and prevent the kindly Entertainment and Success of it.

4. Readiness of Mind. The Bere- Serm.V.
 ss were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they receiv'd the Word with all Readiness of Mind. Act. xvii. 11.
 They were of a more generous and excellent Temper, which appear'd by a Disposition to attend the Preaching of the Apostles, without prejudice of Mind, or opposition to the Truth. And so I reckon the Expression may fitly be extended to our Attendance on Opportunities of Hearing the Word; readily embracing stated Seasons, and gladly complying with every providential Call: a generous Freedom and cheerful Forwardness when any Opportunity is offer'd. The Psalmist expresses this Temper of Soul, by going to the Altar of God, his exceeding Joy: By panting, and thirsting, and longing for the Courts and Sanctuary of God: Going with the Multitude to the House of God, with the Voice of Joy and Praise: And I was glad when they said, let us go into the House of the Lord.

And ordinarily constant Attention on the Ministry you have chosen will be found most proper for your own Improvement: for you must

Psal. xliii. 4.

xlii. 1.

lxiii. 1.

cxxii. 1.

Serm.V. must be suppos'd to have particular
 ~~~~~ Affection and Respect, to be best  
 acquainted with the Method and  
 Order of things ; and to follow the  
 Train and Connection in particu-  
 lar Subjects, and in the Course of  
 his Ministry with greater Advan-  
 tage. Whereas frequent Absence,  
 and Variety of Attendance, tend to  
 weaken and discourage the Minis-  
 try under which you sit, is less apt  
 to promote your Knowldg and Es-  
 tablishment, and inconsistent with  
 the Nature of Society, and Gospel-  
 Order and Rule. Comets blaze for  
 a time, and draw greater Notice and  
 Observation ; but then they are  
 thought to portend Evil, and quick-  
 ly disappear. These *wandering Stars*  
 give a feeble and uncertain Light,  
 and 'tis well if they keep their  
 Orb, and prove not *fallen Stars* at  
 last.

Jude 13.

(2.) There is something *actual*,  
 and in Exercise necessary too.

1. *Divest* your Minds of other  
 Thoughts ; of worldly Cares and  
 carnal Prejudices. Get the World  
 out of your Hearts when you come  
 to hear the Word : lay aside the  
 Thoughts of the Business of Life,  
 clear

clear your Minds of the Preposseſſion of other things. If your Minds are fill'd and engag'd with earthly Cares, or sour'd and leaven'd with Prejudice ; there will be no Room or Disposition for the kindly Entertainment of any Word of God.

The *Cares of the World will choke the Seed of the Word.* And the Apostle requires, that laying aside all Filthiness and Superfluity of Naughtiness, we receive the ingrafted Word. All corrupt Passions of Mind which would prevent and prejudice the Entertainment of the Word. Abraham kept his Servant at the foot of the Mount, while he went up to offer his Sacrifice. Make other things stand off and keep their distance, while you ascend to the Hill of the Lord, and stand in his Holy Place ; whensoever you come to pay your Homage, or receive Instructions from his Mouth.

2. Possess your Minds with a deep and serious *Concern.* Endeavour to get your Hearts into a suitable Frame, and work them up to a becoming Solemnity. Come not with a vain Mind, as you go to an Entertainment and Diversion ; or with a common

Mat. xiii. 22.

Jam. i. 21.

2 Pet. ii. 1, 2.

Serm.V. common Frame of Mind, as you pay a Visit, or go about the Business of Life; but with a special and peculiar Disposition of Soul, suitable to the Nature of the Work, and Greatness of the Presence in which you stand. Hearing the Word is a solemn Ordinance and Institution of Worship; 'tis a Work of a serious nature, which nearly relates to God, and deeply affects our highest Interest. This naturally points out and leads to a serious Solemnity of Spirit, fit to worship the great God, and receive the Revelations of his Will. Come to hear the Word preach'd, as you go about the greatest Affairs of Life, and best Interest of this World; with a like Solemnity and Concern as you would chuse to appear in the Presence of your Prince, to beg an Expression of Royal Favour; or to stand before a Judg when some weighty Cause of yours is depending.

3. Propose right Ends: Look especially to your End, for this enters into the Nature of every Action, and both distinguishes and denominates it. He who hears the Word with a worldly Design, or in a customary

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manner, to get a present Serm.v.  
Advantage, or keep up the Fashion  
of the World; is a worldly and  
formal Hearer: his Hearing is not  
properly a *religious Action*, but a  
secular and customary thing, just as  
the Ends are which he proposes to  
himself. Come with an upright  
Aim. See that you can answer that  
Question which our Lord put to the  
Hearers of John, *What came you out*  
Mat. xi. 8.  
*to see?* What is your Motive and  
Expectation in attending the Mini-  
stry of the Word? Is it some low  
and mean Design, as Interest or Cred-  
it; or a regard to God's Authori-  
ty, and design of Spiritual Good?  
Can you truly say, I attend upon the  
Word of God, because he requires  
it at my hand? I hope to meet  
with some Spiritual Advantage and  
Saving Benefit: To be more thor-  
owly convinc'd of the Evil of  
Sin; more clearly enlighten'd in the  
knowledg of the Divine Will; more  
strongly affected and impressed by  
Divine Truth; more abundantly  
confirm'd and establish'd in my  
Heart, &c.

4. Beg a Divine Presence and Blessing. The Success of the aptest  
Means.

Serm.V. Means, the most powerful Preaching of the Word, and most skilful Dispensation of the Means of Grace, depends upon the Concurrence of the Divine Spirit, and the efficacious Presence of God. And without this we often find the ablest Helps, the most clear and convincing Ministry, the most serious and awaking Sermons, lose their Influence, and are without effect.

*1 Cor. iii. 7. Paul plant, and Apollos water, 'tis God who giveth the Increase;* and the

*2 Cor. iv. 7. Excellency of the Power is of God, and not of Man.*

Now then beg a Blessing upon what you are going about; be with God in private before you appear in the publick Assembly; be earnest in Prayer, that the Almighty Spirit may attend the Means of Grace, and the Presence of God may be found in the Assemblies of his Saints; That you may see the Power and Glory of God in the Sanctuary; That he would give you the hearing Ear and circumcis'd Heart; That the Gospel may be the Ministration of the Spirit, and you may be caught of God. Particularly, beg a Blessing upon the Ministry of the Wprd on which

which you attend ; That God would Serm.V. direct their Thoughts in their Retirement and Preparation ; That he would be with their Spirits, and assist them by his own in all their Administrations ; That he would direct the Word in their Mouths to the Hearts of all the Hearers, and accompany their Endeavours with a powerful Blessing. This the Apostle often requires, *Brethren pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free Course and be glorify'd.* It would be found by happy Experience, that earnest Prayer beforehand, would be follow'd with a more eminent Success afterward.

S. 2. At the Time, or *while we* See Serm. I. are Hearing. And here I shall briefly lay together the Scripture-Rules in this Case.

I. We must hear the Word with Reverence, and Regard to its Divine Authority. *For this Cause thank we* <sup>1 Thess. iii. 13</sup> *God without ceasing, that when you heard the Word which we preach'd, you receiv'd it not as the Word of Man, but as it is indeed the Word of God, which worketh also effectually in you who believe.* They heard it as his Word, and preach'd by his Order.

Serm. V. der. 'Tis spoke indeed by the Mouth of Man, but 'tis the Word of God in their Mouths, and not their own. Our Lord tells us, *He Luk. x. 16. who heareth you, heareth me.* And *2 Cor. v. 20. the Apostle says, Now then we are Ambassadors for Christ, as tho God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead.* They represent the Person of Christ in their publick Administrations; bring a Message from him, and act in his Name. So *Cornelius understood it when he sent for Peter by the Direction of an Angel; Now therefore we are all here present before God, to bear all things commanded thee of God.*

So then look beyond the Instrument and the Means, to a higher Object; confine not your Views to what is merely human, don't fix your principal Regards upon what is nearest you, but least considerable, that is, the Instrument; but raise and extend your Views to something higher, tho farther off, that is, God in his Ordinances, and his Authority in his Word. Whensoever you hear a Sermon, consider with your self, I am now in the special Presence of the great God: God

God is now truly speaking to me in Serm.V.  
the Ministry of the Word: I will u  
bear what God the Lord will speak unto Psal. lxxxv.  
me. 8.

2. With due *Attention* and *Care*,  
suitable to the *Prefence* of the Di-  
vine Majesty, and the *Authority* of  
his Word. This is often requir'd,  
and is unquestionably necessary and  
proper. *Set your Heart to all things* Deut. xxii.  
*whatsoever I testify unto you this Day;* <sup>46.</sup>  
*for 'tis not a vain thing, but 'tis your*  
*Life.* We read of the Hearers of  
our Lord, *That all the People were* Luk. xix. 48.  
*attentive to hear him.* They hung  
upon his Lips, and watch'd and ob-  
serv'd every Word which fell from  
his Mouth. And of the *Samaritans*,  
*That they gave heed to the things which* A&. viii. 6.  
*Philip spoke.* 'Tis said of *Lydia*,  
*That the Lord open'd the Heart of* xvi. 14.  
*Lydia, so that she attended to the*  
*things which were spoken of Paul.*

Apply your Minds with suitable  
Concern in Hearing the Word, and  
engage your Heart and Thoughts  
in it; summon all the Powers of  
your Souls, and unite the Force of  
Nature; rouse up the most wakeful  
Attention of Mind, in opposition  
to Wandering and Carelessness, or  
what-

Serm.V. whatsoever would import, in any other case, Neglect and Disregard. Let the certain Truth, the real Excellence, and the mighty Weight of the things deliver'd, raise the best Attention of your Minds, and fix them in the closest Regards.

*2 Pet. i. 19. We have a more sure Word of Prophecy, whereto we do well to take heed.*

*Heb. ii. 1. And we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard: And must incline our Ears, and come unto him, and hear that our Souls may live.*

*1 Cor. xiv. 15. 3. With Understanding and Judgment. This is necessary in every other Duty as well as this; for we must sing with the Understanding, and pray with the Understanding. As we are reasonable Creatures, and endow'd with an understanding Power, all our Worship must be a reasonable Service. The Understanding is the Eye of the Mind; and the Light of Divine Truth must enter thro the Understanding, as Light does thro the bodily Eye. It passes thro the Understanding down to the Heart.*

*Mat. xiii. 23. He who receives Seed into good Ground, is he who heareth the Word, and understandeth it. This is suppos'd in our Lord's*

Lord's Question to the Jews; *Why* Serm.V.  
did you not understand my Speech? <sup>~~~~~</sup>  
And Philip's to the Eunuch; Under- Joh.viii.43.  
standest thou what thou readest? A&t.viii.50.

Use the Reason and Understanding of Men, of reasonable and intelligent Creatures, in Hearing the Word. The Apostle requires Timothy to consider what he says, that the Lord might give him Understanding in all things. Endeavour to enter into the Meaning of what is said, to apprehend aright the Reason and Relation of things, to see every thing in a clear Light, and upon its proper Evidence, in its true Beauty and Force: so it will come with greater Power upon the Conscience, and take the faster hold of the Heart: It will strike with greater Force upon the Affections, and have the stronger Influence upon the Life. When you are possess'd with the true State of things, and see the Reasons and Grounds with your own Eyes; when you are brought upon due Conviction to a hearty Approbation and Consent; you will be the better able to give a Reason to others, and likely to retain it the firmer your selves.

Serm.V. 4. With the proper Exercise of  
 ~~~~~ suitable *Affection*. We must be an-  
 swerably mov'd and touch'd with
 what we hear, and receive the Im-
 pression of Truth upon our Minds.
 'Tis true that wicked Men may be
 sometimes affected with the Word,
 as *Herod* and *Felix*, felt a sudden and
 slighter Passion under the Preaching
 of *John* and the Apostle *Paul*. But
 we must be more deeply affected,
 and upon higher and truer Grounds
 than any Hypocrite, or ungodly
 Man. For Example,

We must receive the Truth in the
Love of it; with an high Value and
 ardent Affection of Soul. We must
 show our Regards by the highest
 Expressions of Esteem, and earnest
 Breathings of Desire. They are

- Psal. xix. 10.* more to be desir'd than Gold, yea than
 much fine Gold; as sweeter than Hony,
 and the Hony-Comb. The Law of
cxxix. 72. thy Mouth is better to me than Thou-
 sands of Gold and Silver. I esteeme all
128. thy Precepts concerning all things to be
 right. O how I love thy Law! 'tis my
97. Meditation all the Day. Thy Word is
 very pure, therefore thy Servant loves
 it. We must hear the Word with
 Joy, attend to the Promises of the
 Word,

Word, and gracious Revelations of Serm.V.
the Divine Will, with a spiritual
Pleasure and Delight; embrace them
as glad Tidings of Peace, and of great
Joy. So the first Christians gladly
receiv'd the Word. We must be Act. ii. 41.
mov'd with Fear, at the Warnings
of Danger, and tremble at the awful
Threatnings of the Word. 'Tis
part of the Character of the Man to
whom God will graciously look; him
who trembleth at his Word, i. e. im-
press'd with a strong Affection of
Fear at the Denunciations of Wrath,
and the more terrible and awakening
Truths of God. Isa. lxvi.-2.

5. With *Faith*. Every Word of
God is a *faithful Saying*, and worthy
of all *Acceptation*: And it works ef-
fectually only as 'tis believ'd. This
Reason the Apostle assigns why the
Word did not profit; *not being min-*
gled with Faith in them who heard it. Heb. iv. 2.
It would have profited if it had
been mingled with Faith, i. e. firm-
ly believ'd, and turn'd into a living
Principle. For the Expression * is
remarkable, and is an Allusion either
to *Seed sown in the Ground*, which
requires due Moisture, and must in-
corporate with the Earth into which

Serm. V. 'tis cast ; draw forth Virtue and Nourishment from it, and turn it into its own Substance : So we read
 1 Pet. i. 21. of the *incorruptible Seed of the Word* ;
 and by a like Metaphor, of the *in-grafted Word* : or else to the *Con-coction* of Food in the Stomach, which requires the Mixture of proper Juices, and the Exercise of the natural Ferment, to cause Digestion, and turn it into Nourishment.
 1 Pet. ii. 2. So we read of *desiring the sincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby* ; and of being *nourish'd up by the*
 1 Tim. iv. 6. *Words of Faith and good Doctrine.*

The Word must be impregnated in the Soul by Faith, as Seed in the Ground, and turn'd into a vital Principle. We must digest Divine Truth by Faith, as we do wholesome Food, and turn it into spiritual Nourishment. And whereas the Word of God consists of different Parts, of Doctrines, Precepts, Promises, Threatnings ; Faith must run thro the whole, and mingle with every part : its proper Office is to realize the Truth and Importance of every Word we hear, to draw Strength and Virtue from each, and feed and live upon it.

6. With

6. With wise Application to our Serm.V.
selves, and our own particular Case. *~~~~~*
We must hear it, and know it for our Job v. 21 own Good. 'Tis the Preacher's Work to give to every one his proper Portion, and rightly divide the Word of God; but 'tis your Work to take your own Part, and accommodate it to your own Case: for neither will Food or Physick have their kindly Effect, if they are not rightly taken and apply'd in their fit Season, and with all their proper Circumstances. And 'tis a great Exercise of Christian Discretion to be able to do so. For example, You must not apply what you hear to other Men, and not to your selves. Some please themselves with the fond and spiteful Thought, that This agreed to such a one, and That to another: This plainly pointed out such a one's Fault, and That hit another home: without duly regarding what suits their own Case, and wherein they are especially concern'd; which is the common Error of ignorant, conceited and censorious People.

Nor must you misapply it to your selves neither, which is a common

Serm.V. Fault of another sort of People.

The sincere, tho weak Christian, must not discourage and affright himself with the Terrors of Divine Threatnings, and the awful Warnings to the Carnal and Secure, which don't belong to him; or refuse to be comforted by the gracious Promise of the Word, or receive proper Consolations, which do belong to him. On the other hand, Sinners must not presume upon the Encouragement given the sincere, but doubting and discourag'd Christian; or take that Comfort rashly to themselves, which they have nothing to do with, and is not suitable to their present Case. The Rule in general is, accommodate the Word wisely to your own special and particular Case; bring it home to your own Soul; say to your selves, I feel my self sensibly touch'd, that reach'd my particular Case; herein I am guilty; I am the Man concern'd; this as plainly points out my Case, as if it had been exactly told.

7. With *Meekness* and *Humility*.
The Apostle directs, to receive with
Jam. i. 21. *Meekness* the *ingrafted Word*. As a
Cyon in the Stock, which is closely
united

united to it, and draws Juice and Serm.^V Virtue from it ; yea, changes the ~~
 Nature of the Stock, and bears its own proper Fruit. And we must receive it with *Meekness* ; with an humble and teachable Disposition of Mind, willing to learn, and ready to submit to Truth : For Meekness here stands oppos'd to the *Wrath* ^{ver. 20.} *of Man*, in the foregoing Verse. A proud and rebellious Mind, under the power of angry Passions and strong Corruptions, will wrangle and dispute against the Word of God, and rise up in contradiction, if it come close to it, and touch it in a tender Point, in any favourite Sin, or considerable Interest of this World. So they in the Synagogue, when they heard ^{Luk. iv. 28.} these things, were fill'd with Wrath. And at another time, When they heard ^{A& v. 33.} that, they were cut to the Heart, and took Counsel to slay them. So the Jews were fill'd with Envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

xiii. 45.

We must receive the Word with *Meekness*, in opposition to such a Temper ; that is, with a sincere Disposition to entertain whatsoever

Serm.V. bears the Impression of Truth, how
 cross soever to the Inclinations of
 Nature, or any worldly Interest.
 They dare not dispute against a
 plain Command, or shut their Eyes
 against the Light. They readily ad-
 mit it into their Minds, and give it
 an answerable Welcome to the Evi-
 dence it carries with it, and Appear-
 ance of God in it. And so 'tis of
 the same Import with the *poor and
 contrite Spirit*, i. e. broken to the
 Divine Will, as well as humbled un-
 der the Sense of Sin. And *becom-
 ing as little Children*, i. e. of a tract-
 able Mind, without Conceit of
 Knowledg, or Prejudice against the
 Truth; whose Minds are tender
 and pliable, easily impress'd and bent
 into Compliance.

8. With serious Purposes of *Com-
 pliance* and *Subjection*. We must not
 think we have done when we have
 heard the Word, tho with ever so
 great Attention and Care; or that
 all is over when the publick Assembly
 breaks up. The greatest Work is
 yet behind, the *Obedience of Faith*,
 and *profess'd Subjection to the Gospel
 of Christ*. So that this must be the
 Sense of our Souls; *Whatsoever the
 Lord*

Rom.xvi.26

2Cor.ix.13.

Lord our God shall say, that we will Serm.V.
do: What I have now heard, I will
in the strength of Christ, and by
the help of his Spirit, immediately
set about. I will make it the Care
of my Soul, and Business of my
Life, to be a *Doer of thy Word*, as
well as Hearer of it; to express
the Power of every Divine Truth,
and make it appear that *I have been
with Jesus.*

§. 3. Directions after Hearing the
Word. I shall briefly sum them up,
and represent them in the following
Particulars.

1. Endeavour to remember what
you hear; recollect your selves and
call to mind. The reason is, It
cannot otherwise profit, or be of
any manner of use; but is like an
hollow Sound in the Air, or Traces
on the Water, which presently va-
nish and disappear. This was re-
quir'd under the Old Testament:
Who among you will give Ear, who Isa. xlii.23.
will hearken and hear for the time to
come? The Apostle's Expressions are
awful and startling: *By which also* 1 Cor. xv. 2.
you are saved, if you keep in Memory
what I preach'd to you, unless you have
believed in vain. We cannot be
relieb

Serm. V. saved by a forgotten Word, and believe in vain without some Remembrance. The Devil is represented, as coming immediately, as the Fowls follow the Seeds-man, and catching away that which was sown.

Mat. xiii.
19.

But you'll say, What must we do to remember? How shall we be able to retain what we hear? Our Memories are weak and treacherous, we forget the Word as soon as we hear it, and are able to carry very little away. We understood it, and were pleas'd with it when we heard it, and thought we had it shre; but we lose it insensibly, and 'tis almost intirely slip'd from us. We would be glad to remember the Word, 'tis our Burden and Complaint that we cannot. What must we do in this Case? I shall only offer some brief Hints.

Give the greater Attention while you are Hearing. So the Apostle requires to this purpose; Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip, i. e. run out as Water from a leaky Vessel. Attend with all your Might, and utmost Care; with the closest

Heb. ii. 1.
παρεγγέλλω
μη.

closest Application and Intention of Serm.V.
Mind, without a wandring Thought
or drowsy Body. If you don't un-
derstand, and are not affected in
the Hearing; no wonder you don't
remember it after, and can't carry
it away with you.

Observe the *Method* and Order
of things. Many People are lost
for want of proper *Holds* and Sta-
ges at which to rest; and for this
reason loose and general *Harangues*,
in a conceal'd Method, and with
affected Fineness, are by no means
fit for popular Discourses, or ca-
pable of being retain'd. 'Twill be
a mighty Relief to Memory, to un-
derstand the Frame and Order of
Things; what is the principal *Pro-
position*, or several *Parts* of a Text;
what is said to *state* and explain
it; for *Reason* and *Proof*; to re-
present the *Excellency* and Advan-
tage of any Truth or Duty; the
Answers to *Objections*; the various
Applications and Improvements to
which 'tis directed; and the several
Particulars, under each of these Ge-
neral Heads. And I am warranted
by some Experience to say, That
returning back in the Close of a
General

Serm. V. General Head, and repeating the Particulars which belong to it, will be found a greater Help to the Memory of the Hearers, than those who have not tried it, will easily imagine; and no wise and faithful Minister but would deny himself, for the sake of the Peoples Education.

Call over the Particulars every now and then. The Mind is naturally active, and the motion of Thought quick; they can easily take a turn back, without losing the sight of what is before them. And calling over the Heads which are past, when a new Particular is mention'd, has been found by much Experience, to be one of the best Helps to Memory; and few People have Memories strong enough to hold fast what is only once heard, without a review.

Enquire of others who remember better; confer with Fellow-Christians who are more observing, or more capable than your selves. Ask Questions of those, who by the Advantage of a better Understanding, or a stronger Memory, are able to assist you. Particularly, as you

you walk home from the Publick Sermon. V. Worship, or immediately upon your return; before other Thoughts intervene, and drive it out of your Mind. The Disciples asked our Lord of the Parable, when he was alone. And Christians as well as Ministers, are to put one another in remembrance of these things.

Taking Notes of Sermons is an excellent Advantage, and the surest Help to Memory. And I would propose it, as of most easy Attainment, and most extensive Advantage, to take only the Heads, and Scriptures, and principal Hints of things, which will enable you to recover the rest upon a review, and not hinder due Attention of Mind, or proper Working of Affection in the mean time: At least upon your return Home, and in your proper Retirement. And few Persons among us, but with reasonable Care, are capable of as much as this. Committing to writing, is the way to have them always in remembrance; to preserve the Remembrance to a long distance, and receive fresh Benefit, and perhaps more

Serm.V. more direct to your Case than when
you first heard it.

John xiv.
26.

Finally: Beg the Spirit of God to bring to Remembrance. I think we are warranted to this by the Promise of Christ to his Disciples: *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost; whom the Father will send in my Name; he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your Remembrance, whatsoever I have said to you.* He had taught them many things which they did not then understand, and which would slip out of their Minds; both with relation to their personal Conduct, and their Preaching the Gospel in the World. And now he was to be no longer with them to instruct and assist them, he promises them the Spirit to lead them into the meaning of what he had told them; and particularly, *to bring all things to Remembrance, i. e. To recover the Images of things which were defac'd, and revive the Impressions which were almost worn out of their Minds.*

And tho' this was a special, yet not altogether a peculiar Case, or wholly proper to themselves: For the

the Reason of the thing extends further, and reaches to other Cases. Serm.V.
The same Kindness of the Redeemer, and a like Necessity of our Case, would lead one to expect proper Assurances under the Preaching of the Word, as well as in his Conversation with his Disciples; and in order to personal Benefit, as to publick Usefulness. We may reasonably suppose the Spirit should assist our Memories, as well as our Understandings; and should have at least an equal Concern in our retaining the Truth, which the Evil one has in our forgetting it, who is expressly said, ~~so catch me not~~ ~~that~~ ~~which was sown~~ And I think we may plead this gracious Promise in the present Case, in relief of our Weakness, and ~~to help our~~ Infirmitie~~s~~. And this, after all, will be the most effectual means, and give efficacy to all the rest; if the Spirit of Christ assist our Powers, and refresh our Minds with the remembrance of Truth.

2. *Meditate on what you hear.* Retire from Hearing the Word into your Closets, or at least into your Hearts; Not only recollect your

Sermon V. your selves, and call to mind what you have heard; but fix your serious Thoughts, and dwell upon it in your Minds. Draw forth the Sweetness and Strength of every Word of God, by close and serious After-thought. If you delight in the Law of the Lord, you will meditate in it Day and Night. 'Tis

Psal. i. 2.

Luke ii. 59. observ'd of Mary, That she kept all these things, and ponder'd them in her Heart. Meditation fixes Divine Truth upon the Mind, works up the Soul to suitable Affection, and makes the Impression gentler deep: 'Tis a kind of spiritual Chemistry, like sucking Sweetness out of every Flower, or extracting Spirits from every Grain. And without serious After-Thoughts, the Impression upon the Mind will never be strong, or the Influence lasting.

3. Examine the Truth of what you hear. Carefully weigh and consider the Matter; take nothing upon Trust, or the mere Credit and Authority of the Preacher, without understanding the Grounds and Reasons of Things; or so as to resolve your Faith into human Testimony. Examine every Word you hear

hear by the infallible Standard of Serm.V.
Truth ; try it by the Touch-stone
of the Divine Word : To the Law
and to the Testimony ; if they speak ^{Isa. viii. 20.}
not according to this Word, 'tis be-
cause there is no Light in them. The
Apostle requires, To prove all things ; ^{1 Thess. v.}
to examine what we hear in Pro-
phesying, by the Rule of the Word :
and to try the Spirits, whether they be
of God ; because many false Prophets ^{1 John iv. 1.}
are gone out into the World : And
commends the Bereans as more noble ^{Act. xiii. 11.}
than those of Thessalonica ; because
they searched the Scriptures daily,
whether these things were so. And
no Minister can think that a Pre-
sumption in the People, which the
great Apostle thought a Duty, and
highly approves.

Only under the Protection of this
necessary *Caution* ; That it be with-
Humility and *Modesty* of Mind ; a
sincere Willingness to receive the
Evidence of Truth, and fall under
just Conviction of Mind, without
the risings of Passions, or swellings
of Conceit. And with this single
Limitation you ought to judg for
your selves, and see with your own
Eyes. Every Christian has a right
to

Serm.V. to be satisfy'd upon the Testimony
 ~~~~~ of the Divine Word, of every Doc-  
 trine they hear, and that we pre-  
 tend to preach in his Name: For

<sup>1 Pet. v. 3.</sup> we are not *Lords of God's Heritage,*  
<sup>1 Cor. iii. 5.</sup> but *Ministers by whom you believe.* And  
<sup>2 Cor. iv. 5.</sup> we preach not our selves, but *Christ*  
*Jesus the Lord;* and our selves your  
*Servants for Jesus sake:* And have  
<sup>2 Cor. i. 24.</sup> not *Dominion over your Faith,* but  
 are *Helpers of your Joy.* And  
 the Reason of this is, That every  
 Christian must be able to give a  
 Reason of his Hope to other Men;  
 and must give his own Account to  
*God at last,* and not another for  
 him.

<sup>4.</sup> *Pray over the Word you hear.*  
 Beg it may not prove in vain, or  
 be unfruitful to your Souls; like  
 an Arrow shot in the Air, or Water  
 spilt on the Ground. Earnestly  
 beg that every Word may be fol-  
 lowed with a Divine Blessing, set  
 home by the Divine Spirit, and  
 made powerfully effectual for sa-  
<sup>Isa. iv. 11.</sup> ving Good: *That his Word may not*  
*return void,* but accomplish that which  
*he please,* and prosper in the thing  
<sup>2 Tim. iii. 16.</sup> whereto he sent it: And may be al-  
 ways profitable for *Doctrine,* or *Re-*  
*proof,*

proof, or Correction, or Instruction in Serm.V.  
Righteousness. And since the Success  
of every Word of God depends up-  
on the Divine Blessing, we should  
think our selves concern'd to pray  
after hearing it as well as before it,  
that it may reach its proper End,  
and have its full Effect.

5. *Converse with others about it.*  
Talk over the Word you have been  
hearing, either to learn of others,  
or to instruct them ; to give or re-  
ceive some Assistance and Help. So  
will you not only bring it better  
to remembrance, but fasten it the  
more upon your Mind, and warm  
and quicken your own Hearts.  
When our Lord discours'd with the  
two Disciples, they said, *Did not* Luke xxiv,  
*our Heart burn within us, while he* <sup>32.</sup> *talk'd with us by the Way?* And  
when the Apostles had been preach-  
ing to the Jews, 'tis said, *They de-* A&ts xxviii.  
*parted, and had great reasoning among* <sup>29.</sup> *themselves.*

The Word we hear should be of-  
ten the Subject of our Conversa-  
tion in the Evening of the Day,  
and upon every proper Occasion:  
and we should be always ready to  
give some Help, and willing to re-  
ceive

Serm.V. ceive it from those about us ; especially those who are younger and less experienc'd ; at least those under our Influence and Care : as Children and Servants, who may be suppos'd oblig'd to some Regard, and dispos'd to attend to what we say. And 'tis not easy to be imagin'd, how great an effect of Good might reasonably be expected from religious Conversation about the Word of God, under the Conduct of a serious Mind, and with the Exercise of a little Discretion.

6. Obey the Word you hear, and reduce it to Practice. The Gospel is a *Doctrine of Godliness*, not a mere Speculation of Truth, or Set of Notions ; 'tis design'd to form our Minds, and govern our Lives ; to rectify the Disorders Sin had introduc'd, and restore the true Order and Peace of our Souls. So we find the good and honest Heart keepeth the Word, and bringeth forth Fruit with Patience, i. e. is stedfast in Obedience against all opposition, and perseveres and continues to the end, in prospect of the Reward : and so is oppos'd to that which hath no

Root,

Root, and brings no *Fruit to Perfection.* Serm.V.

Look upon every Word you hear, as a Rule of Life, according to which you are to walk; and as a Rule of Judgment, by which you must be try'd at last. Comply with every Call of God; submit to every Precept of Duty, and Appointment of Worship: *Walk in all the Ordinances and Commandments of the Lord blameless:* Be Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only, deceiving your own Souls: Putting a Fallacy Παρελλογή upon your selves by a false and ζόμης unconcluding way of Reasoning. This is the last End and principal Design of Hearing the Word; to which all the former directly tend, and without which all the rest will be in vain.

To conclude; The Promises of Blessing are constantly made to the doing of the Word: *If you know these things, happy are you if you do* <sup>John xiii.</sup> *them.* *Ye are my Friends, if you do whatsoever I command you.* And he who doth his Will, shall know of his Doctrine, whether it be of God. The wise Builder, whose Building will stand, is he who heareth his Sayings, <sup>Mat.vii. 24.</sup>

Serm.V. and doth them. And not the Hearers  
of the Law, but the Doers shall be  
<sup>Rom. ii. 13.</sup> justify'd. And whoso looketh into the  
James i. 25. perfect Law of Liberty, and continueth therein; he being not a forgetful Hearer, but Doer of the Work, this Man shall be blessed in his Deed.

I shall only add, That Practical Directions in Religion, like Prescriptions of Art, will have no effect, without being followed; and their whole Virtue lies in their proper Use. And O that every one who has heard them, may now make the Trial, and begin the Practice of them; that this Sermon of Directions may be heard according to the Directions given, and every Sermon of your Lives.

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A N  
EXHORTATION  
T O

*Hearing the Word.*

Reynolds, Thos.

---

SERMON VI.

---

HEB. III. 7.

*Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith,  
To day if ye will hear his Voice,  
harden not your Hearts, as in  
the Provocation, in the day of  
Temptation, in the Wilderness.*

**I**T is left to me to exhort you, in the last place, to the Duty of Hearing. I propose to make these Words the ground of my Discourse.

Serm.VI course. They are so pertinent to  
the Subject in hand, that I have  
thought I could not better pursue  
my Design, than by drawing forth  
the Arguments which are contain'd  
in them.

It is plain, the Author of this  
Epistle (who quotes this Passage  
from the 95th Psalm) is doing the  
same thing that I am to engage in;  
that is, he is exhorting these Chris-  
tians to *hear the Voice of Christ*,  
speaking to them in the Gospel:  
And there are several Motives he  
makes use of to this purpose, each  
of which will afford a fresh Fund  
of Arguments, with which to en-  
force the Duty upon you. I shall  
consider them in their proper place,  
and take in, together with them,  
whatever else I may think of ser-  
vice to my Design.

The Method in which I shall pur-  
sue the Exhortation, shall be,

I. *To offer some Motives of a gene-  
ral Nature, and common Con-  
cern.*

II. *Such as are more particular, and  
directed to the special Case of se-  
veral sorts of Persons.*

I. I shall exhort you in the first place, to the Duty of Hearing, by such Motives as are of a more general Nature.

§. 1. The first I take from the Gospel it self, which you are call'd to hear. As to this, I desire you to consider it

{ As the Voice of CHRIST, and  
{ As containing things most worthy  
    of your Attention.

1. As the Voice of CHRIST. For it is of him the Apostle had been just before speaking; and then adds, Wherefore — to day if ye will hear his Voice, &c. It is the Gospel which he thus describes as the Voice of Christ. Indeed we are the Preachers of it: but then in the Execution of our Office, you are to consider us as his Ministers and Delegates; who in all we say or do, are bound to keep close to the Instructions we have receiv'd, and to propound nothing in order to your Salvation, but what has the Stamp of his Authority. So doing we become Christ's Mouth, and what we deliver is in truth his Word. When <sup>1 Thess. ii.</sup><sub>13.</sub> we speak, it is Christ that speaketh

O by

Berm. VI by us; when we beseech, it is as tho  
 God did beseech you; and when we  
Cor. v. 20. pray you, it is in Christ's stead.  
 The preaching of the Gospel is  
 Christ speaking by an Instrument;  
 it is his Voice proceeding from the  
 Mouth of Men. Here then,

Consider it, as the Voice of the  
 Son of God. We are told, that God  
Heb. i. 1, 2. who at sundry times, and in divers  
 manners, spake in times past unto the  
 Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these  
 last days spoken unto us by his SON.

Chap. ii. 3. And how shall we escape if we neg-  
 lect so great Salvation, which at the  
 first began to be spoken by the L ORD?

In our Saviour's Transfiguration,  
Mat. xvii. 5. A Voice came out of the Cloud, which  
 said, This is my beloved SON, in  
 whom I am well pleased. What could  
 be said more to excite our regard,  
 and enforce the Command that fol-  
 low'd upon it, Hear ye him? In  
 the Parable of the Housholder (which  
 Christ spake with a view to him-  
 self) we read, that after all the ill  
 Usages which his Servants had met  
 with from the Husbandmen, as the  
 best Expedient to quell those Re-  
Iat. xxi. 37. bels, He last of all sent unto them his  
 SON, saying, They will reverence my  
 SON.

SON. This was what in all reason Serm.VI  
might have been expected. The ~~~~~  
meanest of God's Servants are en-  
titl'd to some marks of Distinction  
and Civility for their *Master's* sake ;  
but how profound a Veneration do  
we owe to his SON, whom he hath Heb. i. 2.  
*appointed Heir of all things?*

Consider him again, as GOD co-  
equal with the Father : The Bright- Chap. i. 3.  
ness of his Father's Glory, and the  
express Image of his Person. Who  
thought it no Robbery to be equal with Phil. ii. 6.  
God : And claims it as his Right,  
to be honoured of all Men, even as John v. 23.  
they honour the Father. All that Re-  
spect and Duty which you owe to  
the Voice of a God, you owe to  
Christ's Voice in the Gospel. Ought  
you not then upon all Occasions,  
to yield the most submissive Atten-  
tion to it ? Is there any Authority  
should sway with you, like the Au-  
thority of God ? Would you not  
reckon your selves oblig'd to pay  
a due regard to the Message of an  
earthly Prince, by whatever hand  
it should be deliver'd ? Ought you  
not much more to do the same to  
that which is brought you from the  
King of Heaven and Earth ? Should

Berm. VI you not attend to whatever is made known to you, on the part of the great Author of your Beings, and the sovereign Ruler of the Universe? O what Reverence is due to him, whose Majesty is incomprehensible, and whose Perfections are infinite, and that can discern the most secret Slight, and easily avenge the first Indignity we offer him? Who can understand his Power, or endure his Wrath! Should we not tremble at his Word, and hearken to the Voice of this mighty Law-giver, who is able to save, or to destroy?

*James iv.  
12.*

*Eph. i. 22.*

*Mat. xxviii.  
18.*

You may consider him also in all his mediatorial Relations: First, as he is given of the Father to be Head over all things to the Church: All things being put under his feet, and all Power given unto him both in Heaven and in Earth. Under this Character he claims from us the most profound Reverence and absolute Subjection. But that which I shall desire you to reflect more particularly upon, is, the Notion under which he is recommended to the Hebrews, in the Verses preceding my Text,

Text, and this is, *As the Apostle Serm.VI  
and High-Priest of our Profession.*

Ver. 1.

Look upon him then as commissioned and appointed of God, to be the great *Apostle or Prophet of the Church.* As such he approaches us with the fullest Credentials, and the highest Authority of Heaven. Under this Consideration he has the Preheminence above all others whatsoever, both in the Dignity of his Nature, and Prerogatives of his Office. In the one you must behold him more excellent than the Angels, *Being made so much better than they, as he bath by Inheritance obtained a more excellent Name.* And in the other, by far surpassing Moses: *For God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him.* In him are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge. And tho' Moses was faithful to him that appointed him, yet he is counted worthy of more Glory than Moses. For Moses verily was faithful in all his House, as a Servant, but Christ as a Son over his own House. Now ought you not to hearken unto this great Instructor? Did the Jews profess such an extreme Veneration for their Prophet Moses,

Heb. i. 4.

John iii. 34.

Col. ii. 3.

Heb. iii. 2.

Heb. iii. 5.

Serm. VI and should we Christians fall beneath them in our regards to Jesus Christ, who is on all accounts so far superior to him? Did the Queen of the South come from the utmost Parts of the Earth, to hear the Wisdom of Solomon; and will you not attend, when behold a greater than Solomon is here? Were those Ser-

1 Kings x. 8. vants pronounced happy, that stood continually before that famous King, to hear his Wisdom; and ought you not to account your selves much more so, that may hear the Word of God and the Wisdom of Christ, who spake as never Man did like him?

Regard him once more as the *High Priest of your Profession*. It is under this Notion likewise, that those in my Text were called to consider him. And in this Capacity also he exceeds all that ever went before him. Wherefore the *Levitical Priesthood* (that was but a Type of Christ) receiv'd a Dismiss, as being of no farther service, so soon as he had finish'd his Work upon Earth, and was ascended into Heaven. It is then of the highest Consequence to hear

hear what he has to say unto us, Serm. VI  
without which there can never be a settled intercourse between God and us. And if the greatest Deference was paid by all the People to the High Priests under the Law, what Respect, judg ye, is due to Christ, to whom they were but Fore-runners and Servants? But then if we add to this, his supereminent Qualifications, his *Faithfulness in things pertaining to God*, his *Mercifulness to us*, and his *Ability to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him*; we shall find all the inducements to hear him that can be, of Love on his part, and of Interest on our own. For what can those things be, other than the Products of incomparable Love, which he hath obtain'd for us by *Prayers and Supplications offer'd up in the days of his Flesh, with strong Crying and Tears*; by the laying down of his most precious Life for us, and by the continual Intercession which he is now making in Heaven? And must we not think them also of the highest advantage to us, seeing he left the Bosom of his Father, and voluntarily underwent the most

O 4                      bitter

Serm.VI bitter Sufferings, that he might  
 bring them to us? Doubtless he can  
 reveal nothing but what is most  
<sup>: Tim.i. 15.</sup> becoming himself, and *worthy of all*  
*acceptation from us.* Therefore,

2. Consider the Gospel, as containing things, which in their own nature are most worthy of your Attention. From what has been already said, you cannot judg them light and trivial Matters, but of infinite Weight and Moment: They are not things to be made a Jest of, or that deserve to be cast by with Contempt; neither are they of such indifference as to be regarded or let alone at pleasure; but of the most weighty Concern and highest Importance. We may with as good reason say to you, as

<sup>Deut. xxxii.</sup> Moses did of old to the Israelites:

<sup>46.</sup>

*Set your Hearts unto all the Words which we testify among you— for it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your Life.* Your most valuable Interests are wrap'd up in them. Thus the Case stands with reference to those things we are commission'd and authoriz'd to preach unto you in the Name of Christ. I shall here mention a few Particulars.

They

They are then *Matters of infallible Truth*, not of uncertain and doubtful Speculation. Whether you receive or reject them, you will one day find them, and that to your everlasting Joy or Sorrow, to be the greatest Realities. They are not the wild Productions of giddy and frantick Brains: We speak forth the words of Truth and Soborness; tho the World that's truly intoxicated, should charge us as *Festus did Paul*, with Fanaticism and Madness. They are not the Contrivances of Policy and Craft, form'd on purpose to impose upon the weak Vulgar, for the sake of temporal Interest and Advantage: For we have not followed cunningly devised Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a sure Word of Prophecy, and to be prefer'd even to that of a Voice from Heaven; to which therefore ye do well, that ye take heed as unto a Light that shineth in a dark place. Ye know that our Record is true: And should you not be willing to hear the Truth?

Again, they are of the most sublime and excellent Nature, fit to en-

Acts xxvi.  
25.

2 Pet. i. 16.

Ver. 18, 19.

3 John 12.

Serm. VI gage the largest Capacities, and to entertain the most curious and inquisitive Minds. They are conversant about the most noble and transcendent Objects, and lead us to the Knowldg of such things as infinitely surpass the rarest Discoveries of Philosophy or Art. Our business is to teach you the Knowldg

*Joh. xvii. 3. of the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom to know is Life eternal: to*

*Col. i. 26. reveal unto you the Mystery which hath been hid from Ages and from*

*1 Tim. iii. 16. Generations: the great Mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the Flesh:*

*Eph. iii. 8. to preach among you the unsearchable Riches of Christ: to make known to you the Wonders of God's Grace, the amazing Contrivance of his Wisdom and Love for the Redemption of lost Sinners. What can be more sublime or noble than this?*

*These are all of them things of a Divine Nature, and so transcendently great and excellent, that the*

*1 Pet. i. 12. Angels themselves desire, with a dutiful Ambition, to look into them.*

*They are also matters of the most joyful and profitable import, full of the welcomest Tidings that could ever be brought to a miserable World.*

*They*

They cannot be suitably entertain'd Serm.VI  
without Joy ; for they are the *ten-*  
*der Mercies* of the blessed God, and  
our crucify'd Redeemer. Mercies  
every way futed to our Case, which  
is confessedly wretched and misera-  
ble, and fitted to afford us a pre-  
sent Relief ; that brings its own  
Refreshments with it, and which  
are further heighten'd by the Joys  
of a yet future and more glorious  
Hope. Such are *Pardon* to the guilty,  
*Light* to them that dwell in Luke iv.18.  
darkness, *Life* to the dead, *Healing*  
to the broken in Heart, *Delive-* Mat. xi.28.  
*rance* to the Captives, *Rest* to the  
Weary ; and in a word, *eternal Sal-*  
*vation* to the Undone. *Behold*, says  
the *Angel* to the amazed *Shepherds*,  
we bring you good *Tidings* of great Luke ii.10.  
Joy, which shall be to all People.

Lastly, Consider they are matters  
of absolute *Necessity* and common *Con-*  
*cern*. Your highest Interests, yea  
your *All*, is in them. Your Peace  
and Comfort in this World, and all  
your Happiness in another does de-  
pend upon your Knowldg and In-  
terest in these things. Mind them,  
and you are made for ever ; neglect  
them,

Serm.VI them, and you are everlastingly un-  
done.

Let me then persuade you to entertain a just Esteem, and to express a due regard for them. Were they light and insignificant matters; were they profane and old Wives Fables, or foolish Questions and Genealogies; were they mean and base things; were they unsuitable and unpleasant, or indifferent Matters and of no Concern to you; we could not blame you if you turn'd away your Ear from hearing us, and you might justify you Refusal. But since the Contents of the Messages we deliver are of such Importance, such infallible Certainty, of so divine and excellent a Nature, of such vast Benefit, and of absolute Necessity; with what Promptitude of Mind, with what Constancy and Diligence ought you to attend to what we have to say to you in the Name of God! And how beautiful upon the Mountains, should the Feet of him be that bringeth good Tidings, that publisheth Peace, that bringeth good Tidings of good, that publisheth Salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! But,

§. 2. I shall exhort you to the Duty of Hearing the Gospel, from the Method which God hath been pleas'd to take for its Conveyance, which is Preaching. And this

{ As it is the most condescending Method. And

{ As it is the aptest we can think of to reach its Ends.

1. As it is the most condescending Method. If you duly consider it, you will find it to be an adorable Condescension, that God should appoint this way of communicating his Will by Men your Fellow-Creatures, and that he should commit the inestimable Treasure of the Gospel to earthen, and (so far) contemptible Vessels. Unworthy are we indeed of this Honour; but the more unworthy the Instruments, the greater is the Condescension of God, and the more does the Excellency of his Power appear in employing them. This Method has carry'd a very mean appearance in the Eye of this World's Wisdom; therefore we find it call'd long ago, the Foolishness of Preaching. And it has not advanc'd much in its Reputation with a certain sort of Men ever

2 Cor. iv. 7.

1 Cor. i. 21.

Serm. VI ever since, who are too apt to despise the Word for the sake of those, whom yet the Wisdom of God hath chosen to dispense it.

But really herein he shows his great Condescension. For it is for your sakes that he hath done thus; out of the Consideration he has of your present State, which is such as could not bear any other way that would be suitable to the Greatness, Majesty, and Glory of his own Being and Perfections. The Proclamations and Speeches of Princes are many times made with great Pomp and Ceremony; but should any thing of this nature be done, that were proportion'd to the Greatness and Majesty of God, it would be so august, so awful and glorious, that we should not be able to bear it. A Proof of this has been made already in the Case of the *Israelites*, upon the solemn Publication which God was pleas'd to make of his *Law* to that People. We find that when they heard that loud and terrible Voice, they intreated that the Word should not be spoken to them any more. And when all the People saw the Thunderings and the Lightnings, and the Noise

Heb. xii. 19.  
compar'd  
with Exod.

xv. 19, 20.

Noise of the Trumpet, and the Mountain smoaking, they remov'd and stood afar off; and they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: But let not God speak with us, lest we die. The Appearance was so solemn and dreadful, they could not endure it. Should God either more immediately, or by the Ministry of Angels, convey his Will in a manner agreeable to his infinite Glory, it would be too much for us in this mortal State to stand under. He has therefore in his great Wisdom and Mercy purposely wav'd what would have been most proper to himself, in order to pursue a Method more fit and accommodate to our Weakness and Frailty.

For this reason he has chosen Men, your Fellow-Creatures, to deliver his Mind, who might speak plainly and familiarly to you, as you see I now do, without striking that Awe and Dread upon you as another Method would have done. You see there is nothing in us to affright or dismay you. We are Persons of the same Appearance with your selves, of the same Make and Constitution, Partakers of the same

Serm. VI same Flesh and Blood, and compass'd

*Heb. v. 2.*

about with the like *Infirmities*. We have the same Wants with you, labour under the same Burdens that you do, and know how to pity you from what we feel in our selves. We speak to you as one Friend and Brother does to another, and as those who, while we are preaching the Grace of God to you, must put in for our own Share in the *common Salvation*. So that you have nothing to make you shy or averse from hearing us, but what might rather incline and induce you to it.

Now this is a wondrous Condescension. And since God has laid aside the *Insignia* of his own Majesty, and has stoop'd so low to meet you, has yielded to act in such a suitable and familiar Way, how ready should you be to hear what, in such a Method, he is pleas'd to make known, and how great Disingenuity and Ingratitude must you be guilty of, should you refuse your Attendance! But,

2. Consider the Preaching the Word, as the *aptest Method* we can think of to reach its Ends. There is nothing you can devise more adapted

ted to instruct the Mind, incline the Will, move the Passions, and bring Men into the way of Salvation than this is. It is the most likely Means to beget Faith in the Heart, by which we obtain an Interest in those precious Benefits which the Gospel reveals and offers. *Faith cometh by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God.* How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a Preacher? There must be some to preach. The Gospel is the Spiritual Plough, which being directed by the Hand of the Husbandman enters the Soul, and breaks up the Fallow-Ground of Mens Hearts. It is also the Instrument by which the good Seed is cast in, and which, where it meets with suitable Dispositions, becomes the powerful Principle of a Divine Life.

And methinks there is much to be seen of the Wisdom of God in this way of dealing with Men; for how agreeable is it to the reasonable Nature, and of what mighty Advantage to inform and to persuade! How proper a Means to lead us into the Knowldg of the written Word, without which it would

Rom. x. 14,17.Jer. iv. 3.

Serm.VI would with the Generality be but  
as a *Light that shineth in Darkness,*  
John i. 5. *and the Darkness comprehendeth it not!*

It is the Office of the Ministry to explain the weighty Truths that are contain'd in the Scriptures, and to make them intelligible to the meanest Capacities. Besides, it produces and sets in a clear Light the many Arguments that are couch'd in a narrow Compafs, gathers them together, represents their true Force, and thereby powerfully moves the Will and Affections.

And you cannot but be sensible there is another guess Vigour and Warmth that comes along with those Truths which you hear preached, than with those you barely read. There is not that Vivacity and Pathos attending them, as when they are utter'd by a living Voice. Were you indeed only to read by your selves the written Letter of a Prince, the Idea you would bear in your Mind of its Author, would, I confess, command Respect from you; but were the same to be deliver'd to you by the Mouth of an Ambassador with the Solemnities that are us'd upon such an Occasion,

sion, it would be still much more Serm.VI moving and efficacious. Now ~~the~~ preaching is no other than God's speaking to us by an Ambassador, and such a way of Conveyance must add a peculiar Force and Authority; especially if the Person employ'd shall take care to keep up the Dignity of his Character, by demeaning himself as one that is *speaking the Oracles of God:* And more if he shall be truly affected with what he delivers, and feel the Weight of it upon his own Soul.

The Concern which a Man has upon his own Mind at such a time, has been observ'd to carry a strange Power with it, so as not only visibly to engage the Attention of the Audience, but sometimes to touch their Hearts too, that are very hard to receive Impressions. There is a natural Sympathy and some tender Passions left in us, so as that when we see others mov'd, it is apt to beget something of a like nature in our selves. For which reason I cannot but conclude a truly serious Spirit to be one of the best Qualifications for making a Man an Orator in

<sup>1</sup> Pet. iv. 11.

Serm.VI in the Pulpit. This, I am persuaded, will be ordinarily found more powerfully to stir the Peoples Affections, than the softest Cadencies, the nicest Turns, and the politest Expressions without it. Seeing then there is such a natural Aptitude in the serious Preaching of the Word, both to inform the Understanding, and to move the Will; how should this Consideration excite you to yield your Attendance to it?

However, I would not here be misunderstood, as tho I thought the bare preaching of the Word were sufficient of it self savingly to enlighten and convert Men. I have been only representing its Aptitude as a Means. Thus a Knife or any other Instrument may have all the Fitness that can be to perform the Operations it is made for; but still after all it cannot answer its End, unless some skilful Hand shall take it up and manage it; and when it is so us'd, nothing can be fitter for the Purpose. So the Preaching of the Gospel, altho it have all the Sufficiency and Aptitude that can be as a Means to its End, yet the saving Efficacy of it does wholly depend

depend upon the Co-operation and Serm.VI  
Blessing of God, the principal Efficient.  
Which leads me naturally  
to

S. 3. The Third Argument with  
which I would exhort you to the  
Duty of Hearing: that is, *The Bless-  
ing wherewith God hath promis'd to  
accompany*

{ *The faithful Preaching, and*  
{ *The conscientious Hearing of the*  
*Word.*

i. *The Preaching of it.* He has  
promis'd to accompany this Holy  
Ordinance with his special Presence,  
wherever it is duly and rightly dis-  
pens'd. When our Lord sent forth  
his Disciples with a Commission to  
preach the Gospel, saying, *Go teach*  
*all Nations, baptizing them in the*  
*Name of the Father, and of the Son,*  
*and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them*  
*to observe all things whatsoever I have*  
*commanded you:* he adds for their  
Encouragement, *Lo I am with you*  
*always, even unto the End of the World.*  
And for their further Comfort and  
Assurance, he ratifies it with his so-  
lemn *AMEN*, q. d. I have pro-  
mis'd to be with you, and so it shall  
be. In confirmation of it, you have  
here

Mat. xxviii.  
19, 20.

Serm. VI here my Seal, my Amen. It is this  
Presence in and with the Ministry  
that makes it effectual to the Con-  
viction, Conversion, and Salvation  
of Mens Souls, without which it  
would be but an empty Sound, a  
dead Letter, a weak and beggarly E-  
lement.

Gal. iv. 9. This makes the Word of  
Heb. iv. 12. God to be quick and powerful, and  
sharper than any two-edged Sword,  
piercing even to the dividing asunder  
of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints  
and Marrow, and entering so deep  
as to discern the very Thoughts and  
Intents of the Heart. For this rea-  
son we have God speaking after this  
manner,

Jer. xxiii. 29 Fire? and like a Hammer that break-  
eth the Rock in pieces? q. d. It is,  
and I will make it so. That Pro-  
mise also is very full and express,

Isa. lv. 10, 11 As the Rain cometh down, and the Snow  
from Heaven, and returneth not thither,  
but watereth the Earth, and  
maketh it bring forth and bud, that it  
may give Seed to the Sower, and Bread  
to the Eater, so shall my Word be that  
goeth out of my Mouth: it shall not  
return unto me void, but it shall ac-  
complish that which I please, and it  
shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent  
it.

it. And as there are many gracious Serm.VI Promises annex'd to the regular Preaching of the Word: So there are the same to,

2. *The conscientious Hearing of it.*  
I shall mention a few: *Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her Voice in the Streets, in the City she uttereth her Words, &c.* that is, in the Places of publick Concourse, saying, *Turn ye at my Reproof, i. e. hearken and obey. Behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my Words unto you.* Again, *Hear, O my Son, and receive my Sayings, and the Years of thy Life shall be many. My Son attend to my Words, incline thine Ear unto my Sayings, &c.* For they are Life unto those that find them, and Health to all their Flesh. Again, *Incline your Ear, and come unto me: Hear and your Soul shall live, and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure Mercies of David.* Besides these, there are many precious Promises in the New Testament: *Verily, verily I say unto you, He that heareth my Word and believeth on him that sent me, hath Everlasting Life, and shall not come into Condemnation, but is passed from Death unto Life.*

And

Serm. VI And again, Verily, verily I say unto  
you, The Hour is coming and now is,  
Ver. 25.

when the Dead shall hear the Voice of  
the Son of God: and they that hear  
shall live. That also is a very gra-  
cious Promise, Behold I stand at the  
Door and knock; if any Man hear my  
Voice and open the Door, I will come  
into him, and will sup with him, and  
be with me.

Rev. iii. 20.

Now the Promises of God are the  
unchangeable Assurances of his Mer-  
cy and Grace. They are as his  
Hand and Seal affix'd to the great  
Charter of the Gospel, by which  
it is ratify'd and confirm'd. And  
what greater Inducement can we  
have to come to an Ordinance, than  
the Promises of God? These lay  
the Foundation of a humble Claim  
in Prayer, and warrant a comfor-  
table Expectation in the Discharge  
of our Duty. The pleading the  
one, will be the best Preparatory for  
Hearing; and carrying with us the  
other, the most likely way to meet  
with a Blessing. God loves to be  
put in mind of his Word; and those  
are the most grateful Attenders up-  
on his Worship, that believe him a  
*Rewarde* of them that diligently seek  
him.

Heb. xi. 6.

him. To come to the Worship of Serm.VI God without Prayer or without Hope, is to come to it not as an Ordinance, but rather as a civil Entertainment; and in truth is no other than turning it into a Theatrical Amusement. It is to hear a Sermon, as antiently they us'd to hear their Poets recite, or as now People observe a Man perform his Part upon a Stage: and thus no difference is made between coming to the House of God and going to a Play. This is to affront the Author of the Institution, and to lose the Benefit of it. But did you come to these Assemblies as to the Ordinances of God; did you plead his Promises and expect his Presence; what a comfortable Prospect would it yield? for how great are the Encouragements that are given to a dutiful Attendance! From this I proceed to,

§. 4. A fourth Motive, with which I would press the Duty of Hearing: This I take from the wonderful and blessed Effects which the Preaching of the Word has had upon the Attenders of it. These may be rank'd under the Head

An EXHORTATION to  
 { Of Sinners; and  
 { Of Saints.

1. Consider the marvellous Effects which the Preaching and Hearing of the Word has had upon Sinners. Upon this account we need Rom. i. 16. not be ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth: The exceeding Eph. i. 19,<sup>20</sup> Greatness of his Power, even according to the working of his mighty Power, which he wrought in Christ when he rais'd him from the Dead, and set him at his own right Hand in the heavenly Places. It comes under another Representation when it is Rev. i. 16. set forth as a sharp two-edged Sword, which went out of the Mouth of the Son of Man, and by which the Nations are subdu'd. Indeed the Word without the Divine Concurrence is but as a Sword that lies by, and has no effect; but when it is taken up, and wielded in the Hand of the Spirit, when he is pleas'd to reveal his Arm; it becomes the victorious and irresistible Power of God, so as nothing is able to withstand it. For Proof of this we need only remark to you some Instances of the Power of the Word upon the Hearts of Sinners.

And

And thus we shall find that vast Serm.VI  
Multitudes have been converted by *~~~~~*  
it at once. We read that in one Day there were added unto the Church <sup>Act. ii. 41.</sup>  
*about three thousand Souls.* And at another time it is said, that many of them which heard the Word, <sup>Cap. iv. 4.</sup> believ'd ; and the Number of the Men was about five Thousand. Neither has the Gospel been without Effect in these latter Days, as would appear from several Instances that might be produc'd if needful. I shall only mention one which relates to this Island of *Great Britain*, and in the Memory of many now living ; wherein at a publick Communion, \*which in those Parts is us'd to be attended with great Numbers of People, there were no less than several Hundreds who dated their Conversion from the Exercises that were perform'd upon that Occasion. It was by preaching the Gospel that the Christian Religion obtain'd at first, and carry'd on its Conquests by melting the Hearts of its Enemies. This Power has now continu'd for near seventeen Hundred Years ; and we trust shall still prevail to the World's End.

\* At the Kirk of the Shots, not very far from Glascow.

Serm. VI. But as a farther Proof, let us consider the various Sorts of Sinners on whom the Word has been made effectual to Salvation. These you will find to be

*Of all Ages.* Old (tho more rarely) as well as young, and even little Children.

*Of all Ranks and Degrees.* Some mighty and noble, as well as the weak <sup>1 Cor. i. 27.</sup> and base things of this World. Some rich, as well as many poor. The <sup>28.</sup> Scriptures furnish you with Instances.

*Of all Countries and Climates.* For <sup>Rom. x. 18.</sup> their Sound went into all the Earth, and their Words unto the Ends of the World.

*Of all Qualities and Conditions.* For the Preaching of the Word has been blessed to the Conversion

*Of the most Ignorant.* The foolish <sup>1 Cor. i. 27.</sup> things of the World, Babes in Knowledge have been made wise unto Salvation; and have had those Mysteries reveal'd unto them, which have been hid from the Wise and Prudent. <sup>Mat. xi. 25.</sup>

*Of the most Wild and Barbarous.* That Prophecy does respect the Gospel-Times, where it is said, that <sup>6. xi. 6.</sup> the Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, and

and the Leopard shall lie down with the Serm. VI  
Kid, and the Calf, and the young Lion,  
and the Fatling together, and a little  
Child shall lead them. Persons of the  
fiercest Tempers have, by the Gos-  
pel, been made humble, gentle and  
tractable.

*Of the most Rugged and Boisterous.*  
Such was the *Jailor*, who, after he  
believ'd, wash'd the Stripes of Paul <sup>Act. xvi. 33</sup>  
and Silas, and brought them into his <sup>34,</sup>  
House, and entertain'd them with  
the greatest Tenderness and Respect.

*Of the most Filthy and Impure.*  
Drunkards, Fornicators, Adulterers, <sup>1 Cor. vi.</sup>  
yea, Abusers of themselves with Man- <sup>9----11.</sup>  
kind: Persons guilty of Sins not to  
be nam'd. Such were some of you,  
says the Apostle to the *Corinthians*,  
but ye are wash'd, but ye are sancti-  
fy'd. It has been also bless'd to the  
Conversion

*Of violent and blaspheming Persecu-  
tors.* These are deservedly reckon'd  
among the chief of Sinners; for  
which reason the Apostle brands  
himself with that Character, as hav-  
ing been a *Blasphemer, and a Persecu-* <sup>1 Tim.i. 13</sup>  
*tor, and Injurious.* But he adds, that  
for this Cause he obtain'd Mercy, that <sup>Ver. 16.</sup>  
in him first Jesus Christ might shew

Serim.VI forth all Long-Suffering, for a Pattern  
 to them which should hereafter believe  
 on him to Life Everlasting. And finally,  
 the Preaching of the Word  
 has been bless'd to the Conversion

Of Deriders and Scoffers. Such as  
 have come with no other Intention  
 but to make sport with the Word.  
 There were some of this Stamp who  
 went to hear *Paul* preach, and who  
 before were only dispos'd to jest

*A& xvii.18.* and banter. *What will this Babler*  
<sup>compar'd</sup>  
*say?* But upon hearing the Word,  
 with Ver.34. some of this rude Gang chang'd  
 their Minds, left their wicked Com-  
 panions, and *clave unto Paul*, among  
 the which was *Dionysius the Areopagite*, and a Woman nam'd *Damaris*,  
 and others with them.

I have mention'd these, on pur-  
 pose to let you see the Influence  
 which the Word of God has had  
 upon all sorts of Sinners; and that  
 from hence you might be encourag'd  
 to attend upon the Preaching of it.  
 And Oh that this might prove a  
 powerful Motive and Argument of  
 Persuasion! Let me say, O Sinner,  
 that how ignorant and blind, how  
 hard and inflexible soever thou art,  
 how deeply soever sunk under the

Load

Load of thy Guilt, how closely so-  
ever wedded to thy Lusts by Cus-  
tom or by Love, yet the Lord can  
show Mercy to thee, he can pity  
and redeem thee, and fetch that  
poor imprison'd Soul of thine out  
of the *Prison-house*. But then the  
Word preach'd is the Key that o-  
pens these Doors; wherefore see  
that you diligently attend upon it.  
Again,

2. Consider the Effect which the  
Word has had upon *Saints*. As to  
this, I might leave it to them to de-  
clare what the Lord hath done for their  
Ps. lxxvi. 16.  
*Souls*, not one of whom but might  
stand forth and witness to his gra-  
cious Goodness. It is not possible  
for me to recount all the delightful  
Experiences they have had under  
the Preaching of the Word. It has  
been the rejoicing of their *Heart*, by  
Ps. cxix. 111  
reason of which they have esteem'd  
*a Day in his Courts better than a thou-*  
*sand*; and have priz'd the Privilege  
of Hearing as one of their greatest  
Mercies, and set more by it than  
the highest Advancements. The  
Psalmist chose rather to be a *Door-*  
*keeper in the House of his God*, than  
*to dwell in the Tents of Wickedness*.

Serm. VI With what Delight have they sat  
 under the Shadow of Ordinances as  
 Cant. ii. 3. under a Tree, that has not only de-  
 fended them from the searching  
 Heat of the Sun, but refresh'd them  
 with its Fruits, that have been ex-  
 ceeding sweet to their Taste ? O what  
 Satisfaction have they had, what Comfort  
 have they felt, what Sights  
 have they seen, what Manifestations  
 have they experienc'd under the Mi-  
 nistry of the Word ! Many are the  
 Benefits which the People of God  
 have receiv'd,

*In a way of Instruction and Counsel,*  
 by which means they have increas'd  
 in the Knowledg of God ; and ma-  
 ny have come at length to be fill'd  
*with the Knowledg of his Will in all*  
*Wisdom and Spiritual Understanding.*

*In a way of Admonition and Re-  
 proof,* by being warn'd of their  
 Snares. Thus have they been kept  
*back from many presumptuous Sins, from*  
*many great Transgressions.*

*In a way of Resolution to their Diffi-  
 culties.* The Psalmist was perplex'd  
 about the prosperous State of the  
 Wicked, and his own afflicted Con-  
 dition. *When I thought to know this,*  
*says he, it was too painful for me, un-*  
*til*

til I went into the Sanctuary of God, Sermt. VI  
then understood I their End, &c.

In a way of *Direction* under their great Straits, when sadly bewilder'd, and not knowing what to do. The Preaching of the Gospel has been as tho they heard a *Word* behind them, Isa. xxx. 21 saying, *This is the Way, walk ye in it.*

In a way of *Support* under pressing Burdens. When ready to faint upon Hearing the Word, they have renew'd their Strength, and mounted up Isa. xl. 29, again with Wings as Eagles. Finally, 30, 31.

In a way of *Comfort* under Doubts and Fears. When under sore Exercise thro inward and outward Temptations, they have found by Hearing the Word that the Consola- Job xv. 11. tions of God are not small.

These are some of those Benefits which Christians experience by waiting upon God in this Ordinance. All which have been wonderfully enhanc'd by the *Suitableness, Seasonableness, and Repetition* of them; the Word having been sometimes so directed to their particular Case, that the Minister could not have spoken more pertinently to it, had they told him before-hand all that was in their Hearts, and had he

Serm. VI study'd a Discourse on purpose for  
 them. And this has happen'd when  
 their Case has been most pressing :  
 When in the Mount of Difficulty,  
 then have they found Relief pro-  
 vided for them. This added to  
 the foregoing Consideration, has  
 sometimes fill'd them with Wonder  
 at the unexpected and seasonable  
 Goodness. Besides, as new Difficul-  
 ties have return'd, and fresh Occa-  
 sions have requir'd, there has been  
 a fresh, most seasonable, and suit-  
 able Application of the Word unto  
 them ; so that they have been forc'd  
 to acknowledg, to the Glory of God,  
 that hitherto he has never wholly  
 left or forsaken them.

Now what inestimable Benefits  
 and Advantages are these ! Do you  
 not, upon what has been told you,  
 grow into some good Opinion of  
 the Word ? Do you not secretly  
 wish within your Hearts, that you  
 might eat of this hidden Manna, and  
 draw Water out of these Wells of Sal-  
 vation ? Come then unto the House  
 of God, enter ye within his Courts :  
 The Doors are open. Ho, every  
 one that thirsteth, come ye to the Wa-  
 ters. O taste and see that the Lord  
 is good !

Psal. c. 4.

Isa. lv. 1.

Psal. xxxiv.

8.

§. 5.

§. 5. A Fifth Argument by which Serm. VI  
I would endeavour to persuade you to the Duty of Hearing, is taken from the Season allotted to the performance of it. It is to day: To day if ye will hear his Voice. This we may consider, as it denotes —

{ That space of Time which you enjoy under the Gospel-Dispensation; or,

{ The present Time and Day of your Life.

1st. As it denotes that space of Time which you enjoy under the Gospel-Dispensation. This is call'd, *The Day of Grace*. And it is this our Saviour refer'd to, when he beheld Jerusalem, and weeping, lamented over it, saying, *If thou hadst known, Luk. xix. 42 even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy Peace!* but now they are hid from thine Eyes. This Day was that space of Time, wherein God was pleas'd to apply himself to that People by his Son Jesus Christ, who was sent to the lost Sheep of Israel; by which means they had a Season and Opportunity afforded them for their Peace and Happiness, above whatever had been granted to any People in the World before.

Serm.VI before. But this was now drawing  
to a close, which they not having  
consider'd and improv'd, he laments  
over them with bitter Tears, from  
the dismal Prospect he had, of that  
utter Desolation and Ruin that was  
coming upon them.

There are several Dispensations  
or Days of Grace, which the Church  
of God has been under from the  
beginning of Time. There is that  
under the antient *Patriarchs*, that  
under the Law of *Moses*; and there  
is that of the *Gospel* of Jesus Christ,  
under which we now are. This,  
as it is the brightest Day that ever  
shone, so does it exceed all others  
that have gone before it for pecu-  
liar Advantages. But that which  
we are more especially to consider  
here, is, that this is the *last* Sea-  
son, the last Opportunity that will  
be granted unto Men: And there-  
fore the *Gospel*-days are stiled in  
Scripture, *the last Days*. God, who

Heb. i. 1, 2. at sundry times (as is before quoted)  
and in divers manners, spake in time  
past unto the Fathers, hath in these  
last Days spoken unto us by his Son.  
And having spoken unto us by his  
Son, he will never speak to us a-  
gain

gain by any other; that is, we shall Serm. VI never have another Gospel, or come under another Dispensation. We may say to the fallen Sons of Adam, You have now had all you must expect, both as to the Means you are to enjoy, and the Season that is afforded you: There will be no other Gospel but the present, and no other Opportunity but that of the present Life. Nor is it fit or reasonable, that Men should expect any other Way or Means of Salvation; as it would be egregious Folly to hope for another Opportunity after this Life is ended: *There is no Work, nor Device, nor Knowledg, nor Wisdom in the Grave, whither thou goest.* Eccl. ix. 10.

This being so, how much does it concern us to improve the present Season and day of Grace; because if we let slip this Opportunity, we are lost for ever? And since the preaching of the Word is the great Means which God hath appointed for your Salvation, how carefully should you attend upon it! But,

2ly. Let us consider this Day, as it denotes the present Time of our Life.

Serm.VI Life: The  $\tau\delta\text{ v}\nu\tau$ : This very Day, and this very Time in which I am now Preaching, and you are Hearing. If ye will hear his Voice, now is your Opportunity: He therefore

Rev. iii. 6. *that hath an Ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.* The force of the Argument or Motive, depends upon this Principle; That *the present is the only Time we can be certain of:* - And this is an undoubted Truth. We have no Power in and of our selves, to preserve and lengthen Life, but do absolutely depend upon the Will of our Maker, who keepeth in his own hand *the*

Rev. i. 18. *Keys of the invisible State;* to turn Men out of this World, and let them into another, as he pleases. And since he has altogether conceal'd the Time of our Dismis from hence, so that we know not but it

Luk.xii. 20. may be this Night, or to morrow Morning, as well as a Year hence;

Ver. 40. (*for in such an Hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh*) how ought we to imbrace the present Opportunity, in order to prepare and make ready for it?

And that which should more sensibly quicken us unto this, is the

Con-

Consideration of our Frailty, and Serm. VI  
the innumerable Casualties to which we are liable. On which accounts the Life of Man is compared in Scripture, to such things as are most fading and most brittle in their Nature: to the Grass that soon withers; and to a Vapour that is soon broken and dispers'd. How diminutively does the Apostle speak of it! *What is your Life? it is even a Vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.* So suddenly, that as he there speaks, *Ye know not what shall be on the morrow.* This alone, methinks, should be a Caution to us, how we let slip any present Opportunity, that God is pleas'd to put into our hands.

I shall add but one Consideration more, and that is, the great Deceitfulness and Treachery of our Hearts. From whence it comes to pass, that none ever put off their great Concern; but they always repented of it; and I fear it will be found with the most part, that they sinned away their Opportunity.

Should not such Considerations as these then, affect you? Use, I beseech

1 Pet. i. 24James iv. 14

Serm. VI seech you, the Understanding of  
Men ; do not trifle in a matter that  
is of infinitely greater Moment than  
all your other Affairs, tho you should  
put them all together ; and for se-  
curing of which, if you let pass the  
Opportunity, it will be impossible  
to retrieve your loss. Oh that in  
*this your Day* you would consider  
the things that belong to your  
Peace ! There is so vast a stress  
laid upon this, and it is of such  
infinite Concern, that the Apostle  
urges it no less than three times in  
this Chapter, and twice in the fol-  
lowing. Do not let slip the Oppor-  
tunity that presents. You are not  
sure of your Lives for one day, nor  
are you sure of the means of Grace,  
that they shall be continu'd tho you  
should live, or you shall have the  
continued use of your Reason ; and  
least of all are you sure that God  
will afford you the help of his Spi-  
rit hereafter, if now you refuse it :  
and to be sure, without his help  
you can do nothing to any saving  
purpose. *To day therefore, whilst*  
*Heb. iii. 15. it is called to day, if ye will hear his*  
*Voice, harden not your Hearts.* This  
brings me to

§. 6. The sixth Motive by which Serm.VI  
I would exhort you to the Hearing ~~~~~  
of the Word ; and that is, *the grievousness of the Sin of wilful neglecting or contemning this Duty.* And here we may consider it,

{ *As a Sin more directly pointed against the Holy Ghost. And, As a Sin that must proceed from, and be accompany'd with great hardness of Heart.*

1st. Consider it as a Sin more directly pointed against the Holy Ghost. It was doubtless with design that the Apostle does here particularly mention his Name : *Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith.* All Scripture is by *Inspiration of the Holy Spirit,* and there are many other Passages which he quotes out of the Old Testament ; to which however he does not prefix this Preface. He had therefore something particular in view, upon mentioning this awful Name : and what can this be, other than to let us know, that the contempt of the Duty we are speaking of, is a Sin peculiarly level'd against the Holy Spirit and his Offices ? And we find the Sin of that People to which he refers in this

Serm. VI this Chapter, and which is called *a  
grieving of God, and vexing of him,*  
 Psal. xcvi. 10. is here expressly apply'd to the Spirit. The Holy Ghost takes it to himself, as you see in the Context:  
 Heb. iii. 9.  
 Ver. 10.  
 Ver. 11.

*Your Fathers tempted me, proved me,  
and saw my Works; wherefore I was  
grieved with that Generation, and  
said, They do alway err in their Heart,  
and they have not known my ways. So  
I sware in my Wrath, &c. The Spi-  
rit speaketh all this of himself.*

Indeed there are many Aggravations contain'd in this Sin. It is a Contempt of Christ; as he that offers an Indignity to the Ambassadors of a Prince, is with reason interpreted to have done an Affront to the Prince himself. And as it is against Christ, so it is against Luke x. 16. his Father too: For he that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me. But that which is the most aggravating Circumstance of all, is this; That it acts with a peculiar Hostility against the Holy Ghost, which renders it a Sin of extraordinary Guilt, and most grievous Provocation.

I do not say it is the unpardonable Sin, tho the deeper Men sink under its Guilt, and the more hardened they become, the nearer Approaches do they make unto that Sin; and for ought I know at last, it may run into it. But the least degree of it, I take to be no other than a contending and fighting against the holy Spirit of God.

For it speaks in the first place, a manifest Contempt of the holy Scriptures, which are the Materials of what we preach, and were indited by the Spirit: *For the Prophecy* <sup>2 Pet. i. 21.</sup> *came not in old Time by the Will of Man; but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

It is a Contempt of the Office of the Ministry, which is by the Provision and Separation of the Holy Ghost, inclining Men to accept of this tremendous Office, and qualifying them for it. Ministers are exhorted to take heed unto themselves, <sup>Act. xx. 20.</sup> and to all the Flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them Overseers.

It is a Contempt of those Gifts and Graces in Ministers, which have been imparted to them by an <sup>1 Joh. ii. 20.</sup> Inspiration from the holy One. Nay,

It

Serm.VI It is a Contempt of the Spirit himself: And that in his Person, as the Author and Bestower of every good and perfect Gift.

In his Office as the Teacher, Guide, and Sanctifier of the Church: As the great Applier of the Benefits of Redemption; such as Regeneration, Adoption, Sanctification, and of all that Peace and spiritual Joy, which is in Believers. Besides this, it must be a very grievous sin upon other accounts.

As with Persons in your Circumstances, it must be a sin against Knowledge and clear Light; a sin of much Wilfulness, Stubborness and Obstinacy; and upon this score it must also be a sin of very great Malignity. For these Reasons, among others, it may be called a tempting and proving of the Spirit in the Context; and elsewhere, a vexing and grieving of him; such a

Eccles. vi. 9. grieving of him, as were he capable of like Passions with us, it was enough to break his Heart. On all these foremention'd accounts therefore, we must conclude it to be a sin of infinite Provocation. It is said of those in my Text, that they tempted

tempted and provoked him in the Serm.VI  
Wilderness.

Ver. 8.

Now they also are partakers of like Guilt, and of equal or worse Provocation, who wilfully contemn and despise the Voice of Christ, speaking to them in the Gospel; for otherwise the Apostle would never have produc'd this Instance as an Example or Warning to Christians. Oh then, how should your Hearts tremble at the thoughts of it! How should you dread coming under the Guilt of such a daring Iniquity! But again,

2dly. Consider it as a Sin that must proceed from, and be attended with great hardness of Heart. It must argue very great Stupidity and extreme Hardness, for People to refuse so plain a Duty, as is that we are exhorting you to. A Duty that may be so clearly prov'd, that has so many Considerations to strengthen it, and against which there can be no Objection offer'd, but what may be answer'd with ease.

But besides, must it not be an amazing Instance of the hardness of Mens Hearts, to rebel against so holy

Serm. VI *holier a Spirit*; who is of purer Eyes  
than to behold the least Iniquity  
with Approbation, and who of con-  
sequence cannot but look upon this  
with a distinguishing Resentment?  
*Against so kind a Spirit*, that is so  
full of Goodness and Love, and  
whose Designs are so much in our  
favour: *Against so patient a Spirit*,  
that has born with, and put up so  
many Affronts: *Against so long-suf-  
fering a Spirit*, that has waited long,  
and in that time made such fre-  
quent Visits with such merciful Over-  
tures, and condescending Intreaties.  
*And yet after all*, against *so power-  
ful a Spirit*, that can wound as well  
as cure; kill as well as save; af-  
flict as much (in proportion to our  
Capacity) as we have afflicted him;  
that can shut us up in Darkness,  
and put out all our Light and Com-  
fort in a moment; and cause us to  
feel somewhat of the Miseries of  
Hell upon Earth, in unexpressible  
Horrors of Mind, and Torments of  
Body; as *Herod*, who was *eaten of  
Worms*, and as *Francis Spira*, who  
consum'd away in Despair; so that  
we should, as he, blaspheme God  
through Anguish and Pain, and be-  
come

come Objects of Terror and Amazement to all about us. Serm.VI

What Hardness and Insensibility must it import, to sin against such an infinitely holy and powerful Spirit as this! Should you not, of all Sins and Judgments, pray that God would keep you from it? The only way to avoid this Provocation, is to hear and obey his Voice in the Gospel. And shall not this be a powerful Motive and Inducement to your Duty? But I come to the

§. 7. *Seventh, and last Argument,* wherewith I would persuade you: And this is from the awful Punishment that will ensue upon your Sin, if you shall continue to despise the Voice of Christ in his Gospel: *Knowing therefore the Terror of the Lord,* <sup>2 Cor.v.11.</sup> we persuade Men. This I shall do

{ From the exemplary Punishments that have been executed upon others. And,

{ From those you must expect your selves.

1st. From the exemplary Punishments that have been executed upon others. The Apostle refers these *Hebrews* to those which God had inflicted upon

Serm. VI upon their Forefathers of old. He  
~~~~~ puts them in mind how he dealt  
with them in the Wilderness. Nothing could be more proper to touch
this People, than such an Instance
as this. He refers them thither,
in order to make an Estimate of the
Sin and Punishment of their Fa-
thers. As to their Sin, it lay in
Heb. iii. 9. their *tempting of God*, (as they were
going to the *Canaanitical Rest*, which
was a Type of Heaven) by ques-
tioning his Presence and Power upon
every new strait and difficulty.
Likewise in their despising the Or-
dinary Means which God had pro-
vided for them, and desiring Ex-
traordinary: which Sin became pro-
voking to the last degree, from their
continuance in it, after they had
had such signal and reiterated Proofs
of his powerful Providence, and
had seen the Wonders of his Judg-
ment and Mercy for the space of
forty Years. Wherefore we are told,
Ver. 10. that God was griev'd with that Gene-
ration, and said, They do alway err
in their Heart, and they have not known
my Ways. He found them so stub-
born and perverse, so sottish and
inconsiderate, that it was to no
purpose

purpose to use any further Methods, Serm. VI or wait any longer upon them : So ~~he~~ he sware in his Wrath, saying, *They ver. 11,*
shall not enter into my Rest. He had try'd all manner of ways with them before ; but finding nothing would do, his Wrath waxed hotter and hotter against them, till at last it came upon them to the uttermost. And as he sware in his Wrath, that they should not enter into his Rest, so he made good his Oath ; for they were all destroy'd : *Their Carcases ver. 17,*
fell in the Wilderness. And they were shut out of Canaan.

Now saith the Apostle, *To Day if ye will hear his Voice, barden not your Hearts as in the Provocation, in the day of Temptation in the Wilderness :* q. d. your Fathers had a day of Grace, but by their non-improvement they turn'd it into a day of Provocation and Temptation. And you see how God did punish them for it. Let this be an Example and Warning to you. You have now a Day of Grace as well as they once had, see that you use the Mercy well that is vouchsaf'd you ; happy for you if your Ears are open to Instruction ! but if you shall sin after the

Serm. VI Example of your Forefathers, God will be wrath with you, and punish you in like manner as he did them.

This indeed has been since verify'd by the utter excision of the Jewish Nation, for despising the Gospel.

Cap. iv. 1. Oh then, my Brethren, as you value your own Safety and Happiness, beware, lest a Promise being left you, of entring into his Rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. Wherefore to Day if ye will bear his Voice, harden not your Hearts. Having seen what Punishments were executed upon others, let us,

2dly. Consider what dismal Punishments we have to expect our selves, if we despise the present Day of our Mercy. If the Punishments to be inflicted upon Men shall bear a proportion to their Sins, there is reason to conclude, that Ours will not only equal those of the Jews, but very far exceed them. For our Sins must be much greater than theirs, as they

Cap. viii. 6. are against a more excellent Dispensation and Ministry than that of Moses, or of Angels; this being by the Hand of the Son of God himself: As they are against a better Covenant establish'd up-

on better Promises, which speak of a Serm. vi
better Country than that of Canaan, even an heavenly one. Against a Cap. xi. 46
much clearer Revelation, as well as more gracious Discovery; and this confirm'd by the strongest Proofs, the most infallible Testimonies both of God and Men. Against better Means and greater Helps, attended with a more plentiful Effusion of the Holy Spirit. In all which respects, the Guilt which the Jews contracted by their Disobedience, is hardly to be compar'd with that which we do contract by our Contempt of the Gospel. But that which does still heighten the Provocation beyond all Conception, is, that it is against the most winning Methods of Love and Endearment, against unparallel'd Patience: and last of all, that it is a most daring Outrage against God, notwithstanding the monitory tremendous Examples that have been given of his Vengeance upon others under former Dispensations; and particularly after the Gospel which we preach has been redeem'd from the Contempt of the rebellious Jews, who tho the natural Branches of the Olive, were cut off, and we inserted in their room.

Serm.VI It is upon these Reasons and Considerations, that the Apostle argues in Cap. ii. 2,3, this Epistle, when he says, If the Word spoken by Angels (who were employ'd to form the Sound of the Trumpet, and the Words of the Law, &c.) was stedfast, and every Transgression and Disobedience receiv'd a just Recompence of Reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation; which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirm'd unto us by them that heard him? God also bearing them witness, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will. How shall we escape? He appeals to their own Reason, and leaves that to be a judg in the Case. And elsewhere he speaks to this pur-

^{Cap. xii. 25.} pose : See that ye refuse not him that speaketh ; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on Earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from Heaven.

As thus it will be a most certain and unavoidable Punishment, so he tells us, that it will be also a much ^{28.} sorer one : He that despised Moses's Law, died without Mercy, under two or three Witnesses : Of how much sorcer ^{29.} Punish-

Punishment, suppose ye, shall be be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctify'd, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace? Of how much severer Punishment suppose ye? Here he leaves the matter again to themselves, q. d. Weigh the matter in a just Ballance; consider the Light, the Grace, the Means, the Helps and Advantages you have had, far exceeding those of others; and then judg ye, whether if you shall despise the Gospel, you will not deserve a much severer Punishment than others.

My Brethren, how should all these Considerations strike and affect you! Nothing surely can be a greater Evidence of the hardness of Peoples Hearts, than their not being touch'd or mov'd with these things. Thus I have endeavour'd to persuade to the Duty of Hearing, from Motives that are of a general Nature and common Concern, which have run to a farther length than I first thought for. This obliges me to be very short as to what remains, and indeed I need not say much; for if Persons will not be mov'd by what

Serm. VI has been already offer'd, neither will they by any thing which might be further advanc'd. However, that I may not wholly omit what was propos'd, I shall offer in a few words,

II. *Some particular Motives by way of Address to several sorts of Persons.*

1. To such as have wholly left off Hearing. The Pretences and Objections which they may make against this Duty have been so fully answer'd, that they can have no cloak for their Sin. And after what has been said, can the Guilt appear so small, or the Punishment so inconsiderable, that you need not fear it? You cannot be so vain as to imagine, that tho' you cannot avoid the Guilt, you shall the Punishment of so grievous a Sin. You have seen there is no escape for you, but by returning to your Duty; be then persuaded to it. Can you better employ your Time, than in Hearing the Word of God? Is not this better than spending the Lord's Day (the special Season assign'd for this Duty) in drinking at home, in looking over your Shop-Books, and managing your worldly Affairs; in paying and receivying impertinent Visits, or in walk-

walking abroad in the Fields ? Must Serm. VI
you take your Diversions, and pay ~~much~~
your Civilities to your Friends, at
the greatest Incivility and Rudeness
to God, as if you had no other Day
to make them in ? It is but a small
Portion of Time that he requires of
you, and makes absolutely your Du-
ty ; but one Day in Seven, and this
for your Benefit, not to receive any
Advantage to himself. Shall this
Time lie upon your hands, and
will you use any Methods to get rid
of it, rather than come and hear
the Word of God ? How does this
betray your Aversion, and at the
same time the Consciousness of your
Guilt ! You are *evil Doers*, and for
this reason you *bare the Light*, and Joh. iii. 20.
will not come unto the Light lest your
Deeds should be reprovd. And if this
be the State of your Case, how sad
is it ? Your keeping from the Word,
carries in it a tacit Confession, that
your Case is so bad you are afraid to
be told of it ; tho by staying away
you do with that cast away all Means
that might give any hope of making
it better. What Folly and Madness
is this ! Let me beseech you to re-
form from this wicked Practice. En-
courage a Resolution to hear the
Word,

Serm.VI Word, altho you come to it like a
~~~~~ Man that is afflicted with a Gan-  
green, and is afraid to have a Limb  
cut off, tho it be necessary to save  
his Life.

2. *To such as do seldom or rarely come.* What is applicable unto these Persons under the foregoing Head, I desire may be consider'd by them. Besides, remember it is a standing Ordinance of God, that is not left to your desultory Humours, but which you are to attend duly upon, so long as you have Opportunity, and your Health and Strength will permit. Nor is every little matter to be admitted as a justifiable Excuse for your Absence. Nothing ought to be regarded as a valid Plea in this Case, but such Works of Necessity and Mercy as will not well allow of Delay, and which, if not speedily perform'd, the Opportunity for 'em may be lost. Weariness over night, or Unseasonableness of the Weather, are not to be ordinarily hearke'n'd unto as sufficient for your staying away, or lying in Bed all the Morning. Nor should any, I think, deprive themselves of the Word of Life, merely out of Compliment and Ceremony upon a Friend's, nay tho  
it

it were a Relation's Death. And Serm.VI  
least of all should the taking Physick,  
only by way of Prevention, be al-  
low'd as an Excuse; it is taking an  
odd way to procure God's Blessing  
for the Health of your Bodies, to  
refuse the Food which he hath pro-  
vided for your Souls. What can be  
done upon another Day, ought not  
to hinder the proper Duty of this.  
The Respect we owe to the Worship  
of God should be constant. Every  
wilful Neglect is an open Slight, and  
will be resented accordingly. Be  
persuaded therefore to pay a due  
and regular Attendance.

3. To such as tho' they do come to  
the Word, do not hear it with that  
Reverence, Affection, and Applica-  
tion as is requir'd. Too many come  
to see rather than hear; instead of  
attending to what is spoken to 'em  
in the Name of the great God, they  
spend all or most of their Time in  
staring and gazing about them; o-  
thers set themselves in a lazy Pos-  
ture to receive, what is very ill  
call'd, a comfortable Nap. This is  
a gross Abuse of the Ordinance,  
and a very great Indecency. It is  
an affronting God to his Face. The  
Indignity receives an Aggravation  
in

Serm.VI in proportion to the Greatness of that Presence and Majesty in and against which it is committed. And how can you expect his Blessing when you will not give your Minds to hear what he says to you? I beg you therefore to be for the future more diligent in your Attention. But,

Luk.vii.30. 4. And lastly, To such as, who they do yield some Attention, do not however so receive our Message as to obey it. My Brethren, I pray consider the Greatness of the Sin of Disobedience. This is to reject the Counsel of God, to put it from you, and to Luk.xii.47. Ag.xiii. 4, 6. judge your selves unworthy of Everlasting Life. And have you not heard that, that Servant who knew his Lord's Will, and prepar'd not himself, neither did according to his Will, shall be beaten with many Stripes?

Cap. xi. 28. They only are blessed that bear the Word of God and keep it, who having treasur'd it Cap.viii. 15. up in their Heart, bring forth Fruit with Patience. For the Earth, which

Heb.vi. 7,8, 9. drinketh in the Rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth Herbs meet for them by whom it is dress'd, receiveth Blessing from God; but that which beareth Thorns and Briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose End is

to be burn'd. But Beloved, we would Serm.VI  
persuade our selves better things of you, ~~~~~  
and things that accompany Salvation,  
tho we thus speak. To make an end:

After all that has been said, suffer me, my dear Brethren, most earnestly to beseech you to follow those proper Counsels and Directions which you have in the foregoing Sermon. Esteem the hearing of the Word as one of your highest Privileges, and improve it with the greatest Care. This is what I would beg of you upon my Knees, and with the most importunate Intreaties and Tears. Alas for us! How many are there who will not grudge the Time they spend in hearing silly Trifles, idle Romances, evil Reports of their Neighbours, yea lead Songs and Ballads at the Corner of every Street: And shall not the Ministers of the Gospel, that come up on the great and beneficial Design of your Salvation, have a Hearing with you? For God's sake be not so taken up with the lesser Businesses of this World, but hear what we, in the Name of Christ, have from time to time to say unto you. You will never repent, my Soul for yours in this Case, if you will but practise what you hear. But

Serm. VI. But if after all you shall refuse,  
it will be most dismal for you, your  
Case will be more intolerable than  
theirs of Sodom and Gomorrah. And  
remember the Time is hastening,  
when this Affront you put upon God  
shall be retaliated with a vengeance.  
You shall speak, but he will not  
hear; *you shall call and cry, but he  
will not answer.*

Prov. i. 28. Time was when he  
would have spoken to you, but *you  
would have none of his Counsel, you  
despis'd all his Reproofs.* And besides,

Ver. 30. tho' God will not then hear you, yet  
those Ears of yours, those rebellious Ears, I say, that are now so  
deaf to the Charms of the Charmer,  
shall be made to hear him. They  
shall be forc'd open whether you will  
or no, and this not to hear the  
Word of his Grace, but the dread-  
ful Doom that shall be denounc'd  
against you; that dismal Sentence  
more terrible than the loudest Clap  
of Thunder: *Depart from me ye  
cursed into Everlasting Fire, prepar'd  
for the Devil and his Angels.*

Mat. xxv. 41.

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